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VAGABOND (Selected from three books)

# BRUMAIRE

THE RISE OF BONAPARTE

*A Study of French history from the death of  
Robespierre to the establishment of the Consulate*

By  
J. B. MORTON



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To  
JOHN AND BETTY ELLIOT

## INTRODUCTION

### I

THERE are three events in French history which made a mark on the mind of Europe so enduring that, even to-day, instructed men everywhere refer to them by no date, nor even by any month's name which is recognized in our calendar. The three events are still called Thermidor, Vendémiaire, and Brumaire, and these poetical names from the Revolutionary Calendar mean the fall of Robespierre and the end of the Terror; the royalist rising against the Convention; and the stroke by which Bonaparte came to power.

The conspiracy of Thermidor was organized and carried out by worthless men who wanted to get rid of Robespierre and Saint-Just, so that they could extend the Terror and use it as a form of government with themselves in power long after the system had served its purpose. For the Terror was an exceptional form of martial law to deal with exceptional circumstances: a temporary expedient used during the crisis of the Revolution, when civil war at home and invading armies on the frontiers endangered the very existence of the nation. Danton, and Desmoulin with his *Vieux Cordelier*, had begun their campaign for a relaxation of the tyranny of the Committee of Public Safety too soon. The peril was not over. But with the victory of Fleurus the invasion was broken, and Saint-Just, who had played so great a part in the victory, came back to Paris to urge the strengthening of the authority of the Convention and a return to more normal government. It was the moment for establishing the Revolution; for consolidating its gains by introducing into laws and institutions that stability which had been sought in vain for five years. But Thermidor was yet one more instance of the triumph of a faction—this time, of a faction which included none of the great names. And nobody was more surprised than Fouché and Tallien and their colleagues when they were applauded as the men who had abolished the Terror. But when the people of France had come into the streets to rejoice that they no longer need go in hourly

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fear of their lives and when, shortly afterwards, the rejoicing had turned to anger against the bewildered heroes of Thermidor, it became evident that nothing had been done which offered any hope of settled government. The principles for which the Revolution had been made remained on paper. In theory Frenchmen had won their liberty, but justice was corrupt, the administrative machinery chaotic, the democratic Constitution of '93 still withheld, and the Catholic religion persecuted. In theory there was equality, but a new race of speculators, embezzlers, and profiteers continued that rule of privilege without responsibility which had made the old nobility detested. In theory there was fraternity, but in practice hatred and suspicion were the result of cynical misgovernment, and no man trusted his neighbour. The country was bankrupt, business at a standstill, morals abominable. The poorest classes, who had most to hope for, and had been promised so much, were given the Constitution of '95, which made property the basis of representation. And when the new Government was installed, the country was confronted with a Directory of five regicides and a legislative body to which the expiring Convention had elected two-thirds of its own unpopular members.

For five years an increasingly hated faction succeeded in keeping itself in power by illegal methods. During that period France was brought to the edge of ruin, because there was nobody capable of uniting the opposition by bringing forward a constructive idea. There were sincere men among the deputies, moderate men who deplored the baseness of public life, but there was nobody of sufficient stature to undertake the task of regeneration, to make the Revolution a national thing instead of an unceasing contest of irreconcilable parties. One principle guided the Government through these five years of misery: by this trick or that they must remain in power. By incessantly playing off Jacobins against Royalists and Royalists against Jacobins, they maintained their balance, precariously<sup>1</sup>. Nor did they show the slightest interest in the wishes of the great majority of the people. They were adventurers who went in fear for their lives, since they were under no illusion as to what would happen to them if they were overthrown.

The tremendous events which had been packed into the short

<sup>1</sup> This was the policy which Barras called the *bascule* or see-saw.

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space of a few years had exhausted the energy of the country, and thus made the people an easier prey than they might have been. It is noted by all observers that the striking characteristic, under the Directory, is apathy. This explains the absence, save on one or two half-hearted occasions, of insurrection. Those mobs of the faubourgs, which had once been so swiftly moved to fury and had so easily found leaders, no longer responded to provocation. The heart had gone out of them, and what they would once upon a time do for such ideas as justice and liberty, they would no longer do for bread. In all their talk the word peace recurred. In all their thoughts there was a final victory of the armies, followed by food, work, and ordered government. Most of them no longer cared about the Republic and would have welcomed any form of Government, even a Monarchy, which would give them the opportunity of leading their own lives in tranquillity while guaranteeing what had been won by the Revolution—in the case of the urban crowds, very little ; in the case of the peasants, land, and freedom from the feudal servitudes.

It was by fear that the Directory ruled. They were able to convince large numbers of people that the present Government was the best they could hope for, by pointing out that, if the extreme Jacobins seized power, a Terror worse than the last would drench the country in blood ; on the other hand, if the Bourbons returned, the people would lose everything they had won. By such threats they avoided the open hostility of all who had a material interest in the Revolution. All who had acquired land, all who found a career in the Army open to them, were determined to preserve their possessions and not to surrender their opportunities. And in this matter, the exiled Bourbons were the most valuable allies of the Directory, since they lost no opportunity of advertising their intention of avenging themselves on the people as well as on the politicians if ever they came back to France. At the same time, the Jacobins also made themselves useful allies, by the violence of their speeches and their contempt for the lives of their enemies. The people were thus caught in the jaws of a trap. They were further dispirited by a change in the status of the National Guard, which was placed under military direction, and by the knowledge, after Vendémiaire, that the troops would henceforth defend the Government if a danger threatened it.

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Nothing is more astonishing in the story of these five years than the imbecility of the exiled Bourbons. What the people of France had wanted to see in 1789 was the King leading the Revolution and ridding them of the abuses of which they complained in the *cahiers*. There was no thought of abolishing the Monarchy. The word Republic is rarely heard. Such men as Desmoulins, who talked of it before people were prepared for it, seemed eccentrics. The great figures, even Saint-Just, whose rhetoric had so much to do with the decision to try the King, began as monarchists. Had the country voted on the matter, Louis XVI would not have been guillotined. His death was received with consternation. France had her tradition of centuries of monarchy. The Kings had made her great. And it was impossible to become accustomed all in a moment to the idea that there was to be no King any more. A constitutional monarchy could have given the people most of what they expected from the Revolution, and it was to be observed with what indifference they saw the Republic destroyed. As early as 1795 newspapers were using the word regicide. Even Carnot could not live down the vote he had given in the Convention. Regrets that there was now no King were being reported by the police before the Directory had had time to show their full powers of misrule. Over and over again, instead of using the universal hatred for the Directory to serve their own cause, the exiled Princes lost their chance by making it clear that, if they returned, they would return as avenging conquerors, and would obliterate every trace of the Revolution. The peasants would lose their freedom and the noblemen would reassume their privileges. There is a shrewd phrase of Madame de Staël which explains the attitude of the courtiers who advised the Princes: "The noblemen of France consider themselves to be rather the compatriots of the noblemen of every nation than the fellow-citizens of Frenchmen." So it was that the people despairingly accepted the rule of the Directors rather than risk either another Terror or a return of the old régime.

As the agony of the country increased, intelligent observers in every party knew that such a state of affairs could not continue. But nobody knew what form the catastrophe would take, or what government would arise from the ruins. The hungry people

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received news of victories or defeats in sullen silence. A report to the Ministry of the Interior says : " In reading the story of our battles one seems to be reading the history of some other nation." No external triumph or disaster, no internal political crisis, roused the slightest emotion. What hope was there of changing a Government when the Government itself controlled the voting at elections and declared the results invalid when they threatened its own existence ? And how destroy a Government by force when armed force is at the service of that Government ?

The Italian campaign of Bonaparte awoke the enthusiasm of the people once more, but not merely because it was a brilliant campaign or because the plunder was on so huge a scale. At the back of every mind was the thought that there might soon be announced the final victory which would bring peace. And it is the startling paradox of this story of Bonaparte that the conqueror was awaited as a man of peace and welcomed as the ruler who would end the wars. But by the time Bonaparte had begun his career only the complete triumph or the complete defeat of the Revolution could bring anything but an uneasy armistice. As the period of the Directory draws to a close, the student is more and more aware of the inevitability of what happened in 1799. The coming of a great soldier had been foretold long before the Directory was established in the Luxembourg. The more far-sighted among the revolutionary leaders had uttered their warnings. Robespierre and Saint-Just had said that disorder and the scramble of the factions for power would end by opening the way for a military dictator. Foreign observers had prophesied the rule of a clear-headed, strong-willed administrator. And as the country sank deeper into chaos, many of those who had feared such an end to the Revolution changed their minds and began to see in a popular soldier the only hope of the nation, so that there grew up round this figure, even before it had a name, a kind of mystical expectation. When the name of Bonaparte began to be mentioned it was in an accent of hope, and his exploits and the legend which almost outran them, kindled the imagination of the people of France in a way that was not to be forgotten for many a year. It is the intellectual who tells us that the people were deceived in their longing for peace and that all the glory of the

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Napoleonic wars was barren. But it was the people who forgave the deception.

*On parlera de sa gloire*

*Sous le chaume bien longtemps. . . .*

The songs of Béranger are not merely the sentimental regrets of an old man who, in fact, had found plenty to attack under the Empire. Those songs are the thoughts of the people and their conversations in hamlets all over France. There is more than a poet's rhetoric in the picture of the old soldier who hides under his straw-mattress the dusty flag of the three colours.

## II

It is surprising that the recent craze for pretending that very great men are really very small men has not led one of Lytton Strachey's apes to exercise his cynicism on Brumaire. For the story of Brumaire is an excellent corrective to hero-worship. The hero appears against a background of lying and treachery and deceit. He himself lies and deceives and possibly betrays. He loses his dignity. He is hustled and jostled and carried out fainting. And, finally, he owes his success to his younger brother. But all this he brings on himself by his refusal, until the last moment, to make of Brumaire a military *coup*. For no other reason would he have accepted the top-heavy plan of Sieyès or consented to attempt to ingratiate himself with politicians whom he despised. No man knew better than he that the nation awaited him, and that few would blame him if he took power by force—which he did, unblamed, in the end. But he was determined that nobody should say of his assumption of power that it was one more usurpation in the long catalogue of the Revolution. What he set out to do was to trick the Government into voting its own dissolution. To gain this end he used every cunning subterfuge that he and Sieyès and Talleyrand and Fouché could think of. From beginning to end the affair was not irregular only but disreputable ; not disreputable only, but dishonest. Military command was conferred on him illegally. The pretext for the transference of the Assemblies to Saint-Cloud was a lie. Murat's expulsion of the deputies by the use of armed force was a confession of failure.

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It is obviously not true that Bonaparte tried to come to power in a constitutional manner. He would have preferred it so, but he soon knew that it was impossible. Yet he was determined that people should say that he had used a constitutional method. He himself was well aware that, even when he kept the letter of the law, he broke its spirit. The parade of cavalry and infantry and guns was an intimidation. It was also a way of exciting the people and inflaming them against the politicians. They, the politicians, had destroyed the Constitution over and over again and now represented nobody but themselves.<sup>1</sup> It was a question of outwitting the tricksters. When it is all over, we find him endorsing the lie about the daggers which threatened his life in the Assembly of the Five Hundred. Even when the call to arms and the beating of the drums has brought him success, he returns to the old idea of persuading people that the thing has been done constitutionally. That is the meaning of the farcial pursuit of the fugitive deputies and the ridiculous debate by candlelight which rounded off the conspiracy.

With the clumsiness of the scheme, the division of what should have come like a thunderclap into two distinct parts stretching over two days and a night, Bonaparte had little to do. The scheme had been prepared by Sieyès with a blank space left for the name of the General who was to assure its success. On Joubert's death his name was crossed out and that of Bonaparte substituted. Only four weeks separated Bonaparte's arrival in Paris from the execution of the plan, and it was only during the third of these weeks that he and Sieyès met for discussions. Bonaparte was willing to play the part offered to him, because he knew that the critical moment of his career was approaching. He knew now that the people were calling for him to take control of France, and that there was support for him among all classes and parties. Very cleverly he perplexed the men who hoped to use him, so that, when they visited him, they left without any certainty of what he intended to do. All the factions placed their hopes in him, and he treated them all in the same agreeable manner, refusing to pledge himself to anyone or anything, and thus preparing the ground for that fusion of opinion which was to be his open policy later on.

<sup>1</sup> Fontanes said, "*Il n'a détrôné que l'anarchie.*"



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Nobody would imagine, from Napoleon's account of Brumaire when he was at St. Helena, how close the conspiracy came to abject failure. His words to Las Cases sound like the description of a victorious march from the rue de la Victoire, at the end of which "I presented myself at the bar of the Ancients to thank them for the dictatorship with which they had invested me." There is no hint here of the complicated chicanery which went on in the rue de la Victoire and the rue Taitbout and the rue Verte, and which involved even Josephine, who was to be of considerable use to the conspirators by dangling Gohier on a string. Because of this it has been said that Bonaparte's chief reason for the reconciliation with Josephine was political, and that he was dissuaded from divorcing her by the knowledge that she could be useful to him. That was one of his reasons. Another was his refusal to submit to the public indignity of a divorce which would drag the unpleasant story of her lovers into the daylight. But his main reason for the reconciliation was that he was still in love with her.

It is not surprising to see the man of action who detested ideologues, lawyers, and theorists agreeing to act with them, because these were the men who hoped to use him and were, unknowingly, putting the sword into his hand and the crown upon his head. He consented to take part in a civilian conspiracy because it was as a civilian that he wished to present himself to France. The army was to be used only as a last resort. Failure was implicit in the clumsiness of the plan. It was impossible to draw up any programme of action for the second day, since the degree of opposition in the Assemblies was unpredictable. Yet the second day was the important day and the Conspiracy should surely have come down to history as the 19th Brumaire, not the 18th. It was Bonaparte himself who brought complete failure so near, and he would have had nobody to blame but himself had the day gone against him. He, with his genius for organization, had not foreseen the fatal delay at Saint-Cloud, during which the Ancients and the Five Hundred mingled and talked to each other. But his principal blunder was the injudicious, and at moments outrageous, speech to the Ancients.

Given more time and different conditions no doubt Bonaparte could have produced a better plan than that of Sieyès. But time

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was short. The people of France expected swift action, and his popularity would diminish if he delayed. The conditions, also, were against him. He was a General who had deserted his Army without permission, and who was at large in Paris, subject, apparently, to no military law or discipline. Bernadotte and the extreme Jacobins had clamoured for his arrest. It was now or never, and unless he fell in with the project of Sieyès, he would lose the support of the moderates—the literary world, the Institute, the intelligentsia. So it was Fouché who talked of a military coup, and cloudy Sieyès who suggested that the antagonists in the Five Hundred should be arrested, while Bonaparte played the more cautious game. It was they who urged him on, and it was he who hung back. All the time he was looking ahead, and was determined that his accession to power should bear the stamp of finality, completing and founding the Revolution. In private conversation, to the men who were his intimate friends, he was not afraid to show his contempt for the deputies, but to the world he tried to appear as almost reluctantly acceding to the wishes of the people.

Brumaire, I have said, was inevitable. It was the only alternative to the disappearance of France as a great nation. It was the only way of getting rid of the men who refused to be got rid of by constitutional means. Everything which happened between 1795 and 1799 prepared the way for Bonaparte. It is impossible to point to a date and a group, and to say, "On this day this group began to plan Brumaire." The conditions which made the conspiracy necessary developed year by year and month by month, until certain figures began to emerge and certain definite ideas began to be discussed. Intelligent men set to work behind the scenes, and slowly a leader emerged; the enigmatic Sieyès, who had made for himself a reputation for statesmanship and profound wisdom by unintelligible utterances and hints of schemes too complicated for the layman to follow. What was in his mind nobody knew. He had an equal contempt for the people and for the aristocracy. According to Cambacérès, he had relations with the Orleanists; according to Lafayette, he was not against a restoration of the Monarchy; according to his enemies, he was prepared to accept a German Protestant as

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King of France; Brunswick or Louis-Ferdinand of Prussia. What is certain is that, when his plan began to take shape, his General was to be the instrument of his policy. And probably only Talleyrand and Roederer were intelligent enough to see what would happen when that General turned out to be not Moreau or Joubert, but Bonaparte. For Bonaparte had the complete answer to the Directors. They had been saying for five years, "If you don't have us regicides, whom you dislike, you will have either the Jacobins or the Bourbons." And Bonaparte said: "You need not have the Jacobins or the Bourbons. You need not even have the regicides. You can have the man who will bring you peace, order, and all the benefits of the Revolution. You can have me." And it was Bonaparte they wanted. Even as a tyrant they wanted him, for the only immediate reply to anarchy is despotism.

### III

Brumaire rescued the Republic from anarchy, but only by destroying the Republic. The system of the Revolution remained, and its establishment and completion were the work of Bonaparte. But, as the heir of the men who had given expression to the new doctrines, he inherited the legacy of war which the Legislative Assembly had bequeathed to the Convention, and the Convention to the Directory. From the moment when France declared war in 1792 every successive French Government found itself committed to continuing the conflict. The alternative was to abjure the Revolution. It was an entanglement from which not even the Consul Bonaparte, not even the Emperor Napoleon could free himself.

War could have been postponed, but it must have come later. Only by an appeal to arms could the debate between the old ideas and the new be decided. The development of the principles of the Revolution was a permanent challenge, too dangerous to be ignored, and the Monarchies could not but fear the contagion of a philosophy so simple in its outlines that the common people everywhere could understand it, and, understanding it, could realize that they had been robbed of their birthright. But neither Leopold of Austria nor Frederick-William of Prussia wanted to go

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beyond mobilization and threat. Their agents were convinced that this was the policy which would be of most service to Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, and the King and Queen themselves believed at first that a demonstration of force was all that was needed to bring their subjects to heel, and that there was no need for invasion. Mercy-Argenteau, who was fully informed of the secret correspondence between the Queen and the Feuillants, of whom Barnave was the ablest, could appreciate the truth of the contention that an invasion, even if successful, would merely produce a Jacobin France, and would lead to the destruction of the French Monarchy. Barnave, Duport, and Lameth still believed that the King could take charge of the Revolution, if he accepted the Constitution, and if Leopold would consent to withdraw his support from the émigrés. But the sound advice they gave had no chance of success.

As the situation of the Royal Family grew daily more impossible, and even their safety came into question, the Queen listened to a counsellor whose advice was more to her taste than the statesmanlike ideas of Barnave and his friends. She was ready to use them and to pretend to fall in with their plans, but against the romantic rage of Axel Fersen their words weighed nothing. She was convinced that her only hope now was to be rescued by her brother's troops. Meanwhile both the Emperor and the Royal Family were being compromised by the more hot-headed of the émigrés. These exiles, hungry for revenge, were not satisfied with manifestos. They had no patience with vague warnings addressed to the men who had driven them from their country. By their selfishness and their clamour they seemed to proclaim that any action taken by a foreign power would have for its first object the restoration to the French noblemen of all their privileges. Thus the party in France which was preaching war as a crusade was able to make full use of their blindness, and Leopold could please nobody. The émigrés thought the declarations of Padua and Pillnitz too mild. The Girondins thought them outrageous.

It was a position that could only grow worse, with no end to it but war. Mathiez may write that the circulars sent out from Padua and Pillnitz were intended by Leopold only to "please his sister Marie-Antoinette," but France was in no mood to allow the Austrian Emperor to use such a method of pleasing his sister.

Jaurès may throw the entire responsibility for war on the Girondins and may say that "the Assembly should have taken the greatest pains to avoid provoking Europe," but the men who had lived the creative years of the Revolution were not to be lectured as wayward children at one moment and threatened as bandits at the next. We can grant that it was the trumpet-call of the Girondins which precipitated war, that it was their rhetoric which persuaded even those whose reason refused assent to believe that war was unavoidable and even desirable. But we must also remember the insolent language of Kaunitz, the movement of foreign troops along the French frontiers, and the loud advertisement of their intention to interfere in the affairs of France.

The very hesitation of Leopold and Frederick-William were misunderstood by the Girondins, and added to the frenzy of the young orators. They were able to say that the Coalition was afraid to come to grips with what it hated and despised, and that it was time to call the bluff and attack before the enemy was ready. But Leopold still had no liking for armed intervention, and Frederick-William had one eye on the coming dismemberment of Poland, in which operation he expected his share, and the other on the question of payment for his services. Not until these two matters were settled did he give his mind to the coming campaign. The wretched condition of the French army was well known, and if it came to an invasion it was not expected to be anything more than a parade, followed by punitive measures. The Feuillants, it is true, had warned them that the people would rise in defence of their country, but nobody outside France could foresee that rapid transformation of mobs into battalions which was so to astonish the world in '93 and '94.

It was the attack on the Catholic Church, the decree of the Civil Constitution, which decided Louis XVI to take the advice of Marie-Antoinette and make an appeal to the Emperor Leopold. In November, 1790, Breteuil carried that appeal, but it was not until July, 1791, after Varennes, and eight months after the appeal, that the protest came from Padua. And it was in that month that Brissot began the campaign with which the Girondins of the Legislative Assembly were to awaken the country to its danger. The splendour of the oratory of this band of writers

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and lawyers, their lack of political judgment, their delivery of the Revolution into the hands of the Jacobins are common knowledge. Brissot and Vergniaud and their followers proclaimed the inevitability of war, and they were right, but their object was to ruin the Monarchy by forcing the King either to join the Coalition openly or to remain a mere figurehead in a Girondin Republic. That was the dream of the men who gathered round Manon Roland, but the people who heard or read their speeches knew only that France was being threatened, that there was treachery at the Tuileries, and that all that had been gained by the Revolution was in danger of being lost. It was easy for such masters of the spoken word to rouse the people, and the more restrained eloquence of Robespierre, uttering his prophecy of military dictatorship, was of little effect. By incessant attacks on the Royal Family and on the "Austrian Committee" in the Tuileries, the Girondins led Marie-Antoinette to appeal to her brother for stronger protests and more active measures on the frontiers. On the benches of the Left the Jacobins listened approvingly to the tumult, and thus the country, totally unprepared for war, was brought to the edge of that crisis from which the Jacobins were to rescue it at the price of the Terror.

The crisis came suddenly. On the first day of March, 1792, the day on which Leopold died, the Feuillant Lessart read in the Assembly the recent correspondence with the Austrian Government. The high-handed tone of the reproof by the Austrian Chancellor Kaunitz and the timorous replies of Lessart were exactly what the Girondins needed. Brissot in his report on the diplomatic exchanges had no need to produce any damning evidence against Lessart. The mere fact of Kaunitz's insolence was enough.

Before he died Leopold had concluded an alliance with Frederick-William of Prussia, and since Leopold's son, Francis II, was a young man of more vigorous temperament than his father, it became obvious at once that war would come. By now the King and Queen saw in it their only hope. Therefore the King had no hesitation in summoning the Girondins to form a Ministry. Fersen had already told the Queen that the best way to startle the Coalition into movement was to confront them with aggressive action by France, and Francis II agreed with this policy. The

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people had been thoroughly roused, and in all classes there was a demand for war. By the end of March Goguelat in Vienna and Breteuil in Berlin were pressing for armed intervention, as the only means of saving the Royal Family, and Marie-Antoinette had betrayed to Mercy the plans of Dumouriez, the War Minister. Kaunitz, when asked by the French Government to halt the preparations on the frontiers, denied that Austria had made any preparations for war, and said that the Coalition could not be dissolved until France had abolished the necessity for it. Cobenzl's reply to the ultimatum was to say that Prussia was in complete agreement with Austria. In the first week of April the Duke of Brunswick was given command of a force which, in the words of Francis II, was to "save France and Europe from progressive anarchy." So, while Austrian agents were trying to enlist support in London and St. Petersburg and the Palatinate, by representing their decision to go to war as the outcome of French provocation, Fersen was telling Marie-Antoinette that the plan was to wait for the French to attack, so as to give time to re-assemble troops in the Low Countries; but, if they did not attack, to pretend to be willing to negotiate, until the Coalition was ready to invade France. From Brussels Count Metternich was sent into the Low Countries to pretend to seek an opening for negotiation. But neither side could now draw back.

On April 19th Dumouriez read in the Assembly the replies to his ultimatum, and the Council of Ministers decided on a declaration of war. When the deputies assembled on April 20th they knew, and the crowd on the benches reserved for the public knew, that they had come to witness an unforgettable scene. While Condorcet was reading a report on education, all eyes were on the entrance, and at mid-day Louis XVI entered. Dumouriez rose and made known the decision of the Ministers. The King, showing no emotion, and, according to Madame de Staël, in the tone of voice he would have used for any decree of no particular importance, declared war on Austria, and left the hall. Only seven deputies voted against the war. Marie-Antoinette's comment, on receiving the news, was "*Tant mieux.*"

The King left the Assembly, and apparently all that had occurred was a declaration of war by France on Austria. But at every dramatic

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moment of the Revolution there was always somebody to utter one of those phrases which reverberate in the corridors of history to this day. Merlin of Thionville, arriving in the tribune after the session had been declared over, cried : "*Ce que je voulais dire, c'est qu'il faut déclarer la guerre aux rois et la paix aux nations.*"

The Girondins, still prisoners of their own illusions, had succeeded in getting war declared, and soon learned that exaltation is no substitute for organization and discipline. Yet, even without their reckless conduct, war would have come. The ideas which had transformed France had a meaning for all men, and must either germinate and spread or be destroyed at once. In the outcome, those ideas conquered to a very considerable extent, but not wholly. The soldier who would have rooted them firmly in the soil of Europe was defeated by the Kings and the merchants. The story that was to end on the field of Waterloo had begun.

Danton's demand in 1793 for the natural frontiers of France, the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, was the obvious retort to the invaders, but it meant unending war. So long as there were armies threatening to cross her frontiers again, France regarded herself as a beleaguered fortress ; so long as the French Government insisted on retaining its conquests, the Coalition regarded France as a menace to Europe. To England the Rhine meant the Low Countries, and, more particularly, Antwerp. That these should be acknowledged to be French territory was a proposition England could never entertain. But when the Directory had succeeded the Convention, and the war had become almost a habit of mind, the operations of the French armies were not so much the expression of a foreign as of a domestic policy. The people wanted peace, but it was only by war that the Directors could maintain themselves in office. Discredited in every department of government, their only chance of popularity was in the reflected glory of victories. Yet every victory brought the fear of the emergence of one soldier more successful and more ambitious than the rest, and made it essential to keep all the brilliant young generals in the field. Perhaps they remembered how Saint-Just, after Fleurus, had told Barère not to make too much fuss about victories—"One day we shall see some ambitious man emerge, who will banish liberty." Not many months before Saint-Just spoke these words,



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Bonaparte, at Nice, was astonishing Turreau and Volney by explaining his plan to conquer Italy with some 15,000 men.

The armies of the Directory had been trained on the field of battle in '93 and '94, and many victorious campaigns had given them self-confidence and a sense of their own importance. Rightly, they regarded themselves as the saviours of the country, and of the Republic, and began to think more of the young Generals, whose names were becoming widely known, than of the politicians in Paris who clothed and fed and paid them so badly. The term of contempt, "lawyers," was heard more and more often, and the Generals themselves presently set the example of talking scornfully of the Government. There was no longer a Committee of Public Safety to control the Generals through the political agents, and, by keeping the armies away from the capital and organizing new campaigns, the Directory only increased the danger. At the same time the growing unpopularity of the Government inside France, which forced it to appeal to the soldiers in the crisis of Fructidor, emphasized the gulf between the Directors and the Generals. The armies began to be looked on not as the instrument of a Government, but as the hope of the nation against that Government. If they could save the Directory, which had no backing in the country, how much more easily could they not destroy it? The Directory could hardly have done more to prepare the way for Bonaparte if that had been its deliberate intention.

Of all the great men of the early years of the Revolution, none understood as thoroughly as Saint-Just how all the work done was nothing unless the leaders had the vision to look beyond the period of violence and destruction to the period of rebuilding. His speeches are full of his sense of this peril. His mind was always busy with what was to come when the invaders had been hurled back, and normal Government could be resumed. His "*Formons la Cité*" might have been one of those strong phrases of Napoleon. The task before Bonaparte after Brumaire was to build; to bring the country out of the misery and disorder which the Directory had left; to unite the nation; to bring back happiness and prosperity by sound administration and wise laws. And for this task the thing he needed above all others was the one thing which the people wanted—peace. The important

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discovery which he had made about himself during the Italian campaign, the discovery which awakened his ambition, was not that he was a soldier of genius but that he had the gift of governing men. *Je suis de la meilleure race des Césars, celle qui fonde.* His desire was to build a monument, to take all that was best in the Revolution and from it to forge a system of government. Power for its own sake he did not value, but power he must have, in order to do the work for which he felt himself inspired. He was convinced that no other man could do that work so well. "The romance of the Revolution is finished. It is time to begin its history." Certain principles had been enunciated by the Revolution. The moment had come to stop philosophizing and experimenting and to apply those principles, not in the rigid way of the theorists, but with realism and imagination. While attempting to fuse all parties and factions, and to re-make from them the nation, he would, at the same time select what was essentially French in the old régime, and adapt it to the new doctrines. For instance, he knew that the mass of the people had, even now, far more attachment to monarchy, as a system of government, than to the Republic. The Kings had made the greatness of France. But a confusion in their minds had led them to associate the Republic with the Revolution, and to think that without the one they could not have the other. It was, to them, the institution which confirmed the benefits they had received, and prevented the return of the feudal abuses. As soon as they realized that equality of opportunity, a free peasantry, and just laws were possible under the authority of one man, they ceased to care a straw for the Republic. It was not monarchy they detested but the Bourbon rule of privilege without responsibility.

## IV

Seven years had passed since Valmy when Bonaparte came to power. But 1799 had opened as a year of reverses, and the victories of Brune and Masséna in Holland and Switzerland had not in any sense been final. Yet another invasion of French soil had been checked, but the danger remained. France was still beleaguered. It is true that the Coalition was in dissolution.

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Russia was sulking and blamed Austria for the failure of Souvorov's campaign ; Austria was watching the internal affairs of France closely, and was awaiting a favourable moment to proceed with the invasion ; Prussia, as usual, was pretending to be neutral, until she judged that her intervention would be profitable to herself. And in the background was England, to whom they all looked for their pay. In face of this situation, which was a serious threat to the work of reconstruction to be undertaken in France, Bonaparte was anxious to make it clear that he had not seized power merely to gratify his appetite for military glory. It was important that the nations which were still threatening France should realize at once that the Revolution was completed and that the chief concern of the Government was to restore order and authority as quickly as possible. At the end of December, 1799, he instructed Talleyrand to write letters to King George III and to the Austrian Emperor suggesting that the time had come for the nations of Europe to cease hostilities, and saying that he for his part was ready and anxious to collaborate with them in maintaining a state of peace. It is not likely that Bonaparte can have imagined that either Austria or England would be ready to trust him, or that he would receive any but a vague answer. He may even have been prepared for Austria's refusal to use Campo-Formio as a basis for a settlement. But the reply of Lord Grenville was foolish and hypocritical. To say that England would only conduct negotiations with the restored Bourbon monarchy was to give France yet another opportunity of accusing England of interfering with her internal affairs. A member of the House of Commons, who probably knew that by now the English Government had ceased to care very much about the Bourbons, aptly asked what the English Foreign Office would say if Bonaparte refused to negotiate with anyone but the Stuarts. But Grenville's reply was the voice of Pitt, and of all his supporters. Pitt had no intention of allowing the new régime to establish itself in France, and was dreaming of fresh adventures on the Breton coast, and Georges Cadoudal, furnished with English money and encouragement, was preparing to slip into Paris.

Bonaparte tried again. Talleyrand wrote a second letter, repeating that France wanted peace, but Grenville's second reply was even

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less helpful than his first, and the correspondence ended. Pitt, in the Commons, painted a picture of France which showed either dishonesty or a complete misunderstanding of what had occurred in Brumaire. He represented Bonaparte as the heir of all that was most disreputable in the Revolution, the champion of all the atrocities.

Already, at the very beginning of his rule, Bonaparte was caught in the toils of '92. The argument could only go round and round in circles: France demanding her natural frontiers, and further bastions beyond those frontiers as a guarantee against foreign invasion; Europe refusing to accept French conquests, particularly at a time when the greatest soldier of his age was at the head of the French Government. The conflict in the end was bound to be between France and the most powerful and tenacious of her opponents, between a land power and a sea power, who, each debarred from any frontal assault which might settle the question once and for all, sought each other all over the world. The one said: "I ask nothing better than to settle down in peace, but your continued opposition forces me to go on making war." The other said: "I, too, want peace, but so long as you hold anything I do not want you to hold, I will continue to oppose you."

It cannot be doubted that Bonaparte wanted peace. A man of his high intelligence is not satisfied to spend his life on the battlefield, and the work that he did in the four years of the Consulate showed him how much more there was to be done. It is only possible to present the popular picture of him as an adventurer who wanted nothing but military glory by ignoring the years when his constructive genius was given its opportunity.<sup>1</sup> And it was during the Consulate that the last chance of peace was lost.

As soon as it was seen that Bonaparte was something more than General Vendémiaire, and could not be treated like a soldier of fortune who has seized power from the lowest motives, there came a change of mind in the principal opponent of the new ideas. It was not hatred of what the Jacobins had done that induced England to subsidize armies and encourage conspiracies. By the time the achievements and the hopes of the Revolution were incarnated in Bonaparte, fear of a powerful rival, with a young

<sup>1</sup> A concise account of what was done in the four years will be found in Louis Madelin's *Napoléon* (Dunod, 1935).

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and expanding Colonial Empire and flourishing trade, had taken the place of just indignation. Lunéville consolidated Campo-Formio, and Amiens established the Revolution. While the common people of London were cheering Lauriston in the streets, the shrewder financiers and merchants were looking to the Commons to assure them that the peace was interpreted by them only as an armistice and that, if France refused a commercial treaty, the war would be continued. It was the spectacle of what France could do at peace which alarmed them even more than the realization of what she could do at war. And they had the backing of most of the aristocratic families. When England finally declared war, Fox answered Pitt with a sentence which reveals very clearly what was really behind the rupture. Any French prosperity, then, said Fox, at home or abroad, was to be an offence and a cause of war to England. When Talleyrand said that France had been forced to expand because of the attempts of other nations to interfere with her, he was uttering a half-truth. We who have experienced 1870, 1914, and 1940 should find it easy to understand the demand for the natural frontiers by those who suffered the earlier invasions. But Talleyrand's phrase takes no account of the annexations of the first Revolutionary armies in the name of Liberty, and ignores the money-making and pillaging campaigns of the Directory. If Talleyrand had added the words "after 1803," there would have been more truth in what he said. Bonaparte's "England will have compelled us to conquer Europe" is not so extravagant as it sounds. But by the time he was on his way to this conquest, the great dream of Europe as a federation of nations under the rule of the French Emperor had set his imagination on fire, and certainly justified his enemies in rejecting an idea which had not the smallest attraction for them. Yet Napoleon might have re-made Europe. He was convinced that, all wars between European nations being civil wars, there must be one authority ruling the federated states of Europe, with one code of laws, one supreme Court of Appeal, one currency, one system of weights and measures—Europe restored to the Roman order, himself as Charlemagne. Had he succeeded in establishing his system, we might have been spared Prussia's barbarous parody of his ideas, and all the misery and destruction of her attacks on a disunited Europe.

## CHAPTER I

### *The Political Situation after the Death of Robespierre*

#### I

SAINT-JUST, in that last speech of his, of which only the opening sentences were spoken before the storm of Thermidor broke, repeated what had been the burden of all his warnings : that only institutions and laws well founded could produce a strong government and save France from the rule of this faction or that. But after his death there was nobody to act upon his warning, because the prophecy of Vergniaud had come to pass. Like Saturn, the Revolution had devoured its children, and no man with the power or the prestige to unite the nation remained. And so, for five years, France was misgoverned, or hardly governed at all, by an incompetent faction whose only concern was to escape retribution for the moral, political, social, and financial chaos which had dragged the country to the very edge of ruin. At the end of those five years a victorious soldier, whose coming many had foreseen, based his policy for the restoration of France and the founding of the Revolution on unity. Almost as though the echo of Saint-Just's repeated demand had lingered in the air, and been heard across the five years, that soldier refused to be any faction's man, and replied to all overtures from parties : "*Je suis national.*"

#### II

The sudden spontaneous outbreak of popular rejoicing which followed the death of Robespierre was due to a misunderstanding of the conspiracy which brought about his fall. Robespierre was regarded as the dictator of the Committee of Public Safety, the man who had imposed and directed the system of the Terror. It was thought that the conspirators had made up their minds to get rid of him, because they wanted to put an end to the Terror.

This was a complete reversal of the truth. Robespierre had been attacked and brought to the guillotine because he tried to interfere with those who wanted to increase the severity of the Terror. It was he who had become disgusted with the bloodshed, for which he was so largely responsible. It was his enemies who were determined to continue and even to intensify it. The day after Robespierre's death, Barère made it quite clear that he and his friends regarded what had occurred as of slight importance—a mere difference of opinion in the Committee, which would not have any noticeable sequel. But to the crowds who came out into the streets, dancing and singing and cheering, the death of Robespierre meant the end of the Terror. It was not because they thought they would now be better governed that they rejoiced, but because the shadow of the man they feared, which was the shadow of death, was no more over the land.

Nobody was more astonished than the conspirators themselves when they found that they were regarded as heroic liberators. Ruffians like Barras and Tallien and Fouché, who knew how little cause the people had to be grateful to them, saw with amazement that their plot to save their own lives and to provide the guillotine with even more victims, was regarded as a valiant stroke against tyranny, and a deliverance from daily dread. It hardly needs to be said that they were not slow in making up their minds what to do. If the people wanted to make heroes of them, so much the better. Terror they regarded as a means for keeping themselves in power. If they could remain in power without it, that would suit them equally well. They were not going to be foolish enough to point out to the people that there was a misunderstanding. It was wiser and more pleasant to acknowledge the cheering with smiles and to play the part which had been thrust upon them. They, therefore, hid their surprise and prepared to benefit by the touching gratitude shown to them.

In order to gain the necessary support for their plot against Robespierre, the rebels in the two Committees and in the Convention had accepted the help of the moderate Centre party. They were uneasy partners, since their aims were so different. The Centre was quite ready to join in the attack on Robespierre and his friends, but had no intention of remaining under the thumb

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of the Committee of Public Safety, and allowing the Terror to continue. The astonishing result of Thermidor made it clear to Tallien and his group that it would be profitable to them to maintain the strange alliance for a while. In fact, it was necessary for them to maintain it. They could not turn round and say to the people who were calling them their saviours, "One moment. This is not what we intended. The Terror must go on." That was not the way to keep themselves in power, and would be merely playing into the hands of the Centre. They remembered that last tumultuous scene in the Convention, when Robespierre, like a trapped animal, finding no pity on the benches where the Mountain sat, made his despairing appeal to the Centre, crying to the "honest men, virtuous citizens," to save him from the "assassins who refuse me speech." The Centre, as the party of reaction, had the people behind it, and the conspirators, knowing how during a revolution popularity comes and goes with bewildering rapidity, attached themselves to their new friends and prepared to utilize their considerable talent in establishing themselves firmly in power. Well might Legendre plead for a convenient forgetfulness of the past. His friends had not always been high-minded humanitarians, beloved by the people, and there was still a danger that their achievements before their startling conversion might be remembered.

And that is exactly what happened. It was a second, equally sudden and violent surprise for the conspirators when the people, recollecting themselves after that first wild outburst of joy, began to tell each other that the men who had delivered them from Robespierre had been Robespierre's colleagues, and the Convention found itself compelled to listen to the loud and angry voice of public opinion. New faces appeared in the Committee of Public Safety. In place of the three dead members appeared Treilhard, who had voted for a reprieve during the proceedings against Louis XVI, and Laloy, whose family was suspected of Royalist susceptibilities, and two old friends of Danton, and Tallien. The friends of Robespierre, such as David, were replaced at the Committee of General Security by Goupilleau de Fontenay, Merlin de Thionville, Dumont, and Legendre. The powers of both Committees were considerably curtailed, and there was now no



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chance of Barère, Billaud-Varenne, and Collot d'Herbois being able to turn Thermidor to their own advantage, as they had intended. The Revolutionary Tribunal, having continued its work for a day or two, disappeared, to be re-organized. Dumas, its President, and several of its so-called jurymen were guillotined. Fouquier and Herman found themselves in prison. The various officials who provided the victims for the Tribunal to send to the guillotine were arrested. Prisoners awaiting trial, that is to say condemnation, no longer heard their names called from the fatal list, but were released, which was an admission that they had been unjustly detained. The revolutionary Committees of the Sections were denounced in the Convention, and the Sections themselves, which had been the inspirers and organizers of the popular insurrections, were swallowed up in twelve *arrondissements*, with newly appointed administrative officers. Even the Commune lost all its power.

The men and women released from prison had their vivid stories to tell. People were not afraid any more to listen to these stories and to pass them on, nor were newspapers afraid to publish them. Friends and relatives of victims came out into the open, and the country as a whole soon realized that the campaign against royalists and aristocrats had struck down thousands of humbler people. Shopkeepers and clerks had perished, or languished in their prisons, as well as the more nobly born. Then from the provinces, from Lyons and Nîmes and Nantes and Arras began to arrive deputations of the survivors of the butcheries carried out by the agents of the Committee, to tell their stories against Fouché and Carrier and Le Bon. At the bar of the Convention appeared eye-witnesses of what had been done.

When the conspirators saw that their brief hour of popularity was over, and that they were by no means as secure as they thought, they did what was, to them, the obvious thing. They had been like men who come before the curtain to answer the applause and to take their bow, and are confronted, not by the friendly audience they have been led to expect, but by a howling, booing mob. But most of them were astute enough to grasp the fact that their only chance of safety was to direct the outcry, instead of being its victim. Their first thought had been to make

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Robespierre the scapegoat, to blame him for all that had occurred. But the recent revelations made that impossible. They therefore had to turn and rend their former accomplices. Having posed as the liberators of the people, they must now pose as their avengers. Hence the elevating spectacle of Fouché, the butcher of Lyons, calling for the head of Carrier, the butcher of Nantes ; of Fréron, stained with the massacres of Toulon and Marseilles, harrying Fouquier-Tinville of the Revolutionary Tribunal ; of Tallien, the terrorist of Bordeaux, goaded by Theresia Cabarrus, threatening his fellow-conspirator Billaud-Varenne. Billaud, Collot d'Herbois, and Barère did not make the *volte-face*. Either they were not clever enough to seize their chance or they thought that they could survive the storm in some other way. When Lecointre attacked them openly in the Convention, and could prove nothing, he narrowly escaped being arrested himself. This was warning enough to the Jacobins that it was the Centre that had the power in the Assembly, and that they would have to go warily. Although Billaud, Collot, and Barère had to resign from the Committee of Public Safety, Tallien soon followed them, and was also, with Fréron and Lecointre, expelled from the Jacobins Club. Both their old friends and their new were determined to show the conspirators how difficult it would be to face both ways.

At any critical period of the Revolution, when the secret police wished to supplement what they learnt in the streets and the cafés, they had only to visit the theatres to catch an echo of the mood of the public. That mood was growing more and more violent against the Jacobins. Any allusion in a play or a song, which could be twisted to bear an anti-Jacobin significance, was eagerly seized by the audiences, who were more and more inclined to turn every theatre, no matter what was being performed, into an undisciplined debating society. From the performances the excited audiences came out into the streets, carrying with them the hatred and thirst for revenge which made the conspirators of Thermidor only more determined to lead the movement rather than succumb to it.

The first blow was struck against the Jacobin Club, when all the daughter-societies were suppressed. Billaud-Varenne had the courage to go on resisting and even to denounce the turncoats, and

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Collot d'Herbois knew well whence Tallien drew his inspiration when he said: "Scoundrels have promised our heads to their concubines." The wealth of Cabarrus was very useful in carrying out Tallien's loud demand for the freedom of the press—which meant freedom to attack the Jacobins by the most unscrupulous methods known to journalism. The Convention made no attempt to restrain the licence of the Press, or to exercise any control over the flood of pamphlets, because the men whose help they had accepted were too useful to offend. It was his own kind that Tallien and his group were hunting, and his foul methods were no doubt the most effective methods against such men. The Centre party in the Convention allowed the conspirators of Thermidor to do what they pleased, so long as the Jacobin menace was quickly ended. After that it would be time to take a more active part in the government of the country.

The most pertinacious, the most ruthless of the men who now pursued the Jacobins was Stanislas Fréron, the son of that Fréron who had waged, almost alone, a ceaseless war against Voltaire and the Encyclopædists, and in defence of the Church and the Monarchy. In those principles the young Fréron was brought up. The King of Poland was his godfather and one day at Versailles he had heard the Dauphin, the future Louis XVI, prophesy that he would grow up to be the journalist who would finish his father's work of routing the new sect of the philosophers. After he had left the College of Louis-le-Grand, where his contemporaries were Robespierre and Desmoulins, his father's paper "*L'Année Littéraire*," which was his only inheritance, went, by a decision of the Courts, to his stepmother. The injustice of this decision warped his nature and he became the dissolute and corrupt man he was to remain. But there was a special reason for his frantic attacks on his old comrades after Thermidor. He had been the intimate friend of Camille and Lucile Desmoulins, and the two men had worked together as journalists. Stanislas had been admitted to their home as their dearest friend and had shared the happy days at Bourg-la-Reine, where the Revolution could be forgotten for a few hours. He had fallen in love with Lucile, but he had not raised his voice to save either Camille or Lucile from the guillotine, and his conscience now gave him no rest.

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After Thermidor, when the outcry arose against the associates of Robespierre, he saw a chance for revenge, and he took it with all the crazy violence of his unbalanced temperament, even demanding the razing of the Hotel de Ville, "the Louvre of the tyrant Robespierre." He, who had never become accustomed to speaking in Assemblies, now repeatedly mounted the tribune in the Convention. But he relied principally on his paper, the "*Orateur du Peuple*," which he filled with his denunciations, and on the famous Muscadins, the "*Jeunesse dorée de Fréron*." These bands of young middle-class dandies went about the streets armed with clubs and shouting "Down with the Jacobins." Their headquarters was the café de Chartres, where they met to plan their disturbances.

Fréron's most vigorous supporter was Tallien, who also controlled a newspaper, the "*Ami du Citoyen*," and it was he who conducted the campaign against Fouché. Fouché had not joined the Jacobin turncoats, since he saw his best chance of survival in seeking refuge with the remnant of the Mountain. By attacking Carrier he hoped to divert attention from his own equally abominable past, and for this purpose he used Babeuf and his "*Tribun du Peuple*." Babeuf also wrote a pamphlet against Carrier. But Fouché had made the wrong choice. His unpopularity increased, and a decree for his arrest was carried by a large majority in the Convention. But the decree was never put into effect. Possibly Barras or Tallien saved him—so confused and unpredictable were men's motives and actions at this time.

The group of men who led the attack on the Jacobins had their grotesque Egeria. She was the notorious Theresia Cabarrus, daughter of a Spanish banker, divorced wife of the Marquis de Fontenay, now Madame Tallien, soon to be the Queen-consort of Barras at the Directory and the mistress of Ouvrard the banker, and finally Princesse de Caraman-Chimay. She was twenty-one years of age when she came out of prison after Thermidor, and was soon to become the most talked-of courtesan in Paris. The romantic story of the dagger she had sent Tallien from prison, to inspire him to destroy Robespierre, was repeated everywhere, and in after years she referred to the 9th Thermidor as the happiest day of my life, "Since my little hand played a small part in the

overthrow of the guillotine." An attempted assassination of Tallien helped to increase the popularity of both of them. From her house, at the western end of the Cours la Reine, this beautiful woman dictated to the Merveilleuses the indecent fashions and licentious behaviour which soon became the rage. The house itself, la Chaumière, had a sham-rustic exterior, with a thatched roof, and an interior like the scenery of a theatre. It soon became the meeting place of the new race of speculators, brokers, profiteers, bankers, politicians, and impoverished noblemen. The extravagant behaviour of the hostess, the luxury in which she lived, the frantic pursuit of pleasure over which she presided, all communicated an unhealthy excitement to her circle. Many had lived too long within the sound of Robespierre's sermons on virtue not to seize eagerly the opportunities for vice. Those who had never experienced the careless life of the rich as it was lived before 1789 suddenly found the austerities of the Republic unattractive and even repellent. Those who had been brought up among the leisured class and remembered the daily life of the courtiers, gratefully accepted the meretricious glitter which helped them to forget the departure of grace and charm from France. La Chaumière was a kind of base parody of those salons of the old régime which had been the glory of the social life of France, from the days when Corneille was to be seen at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, to the time when Germaine Necker was preparing her career in her mother's salon in the rue Bergère. For nearly two centuries the wittiest, the most learned, the most accomplished men and women of France had made conversation a high art, and had set a standard for the intellectual activities of the nation. The aim of Cabarrus was a less exalted one. Yet this pest-house exercised a considerable influence on the politics of the day. Billaud-Varenne, as we have seen, was one of the few to protest courageously against the terrorization of the terrorists, and when, to answer him, Fréron and Merlin de Thionville went to close the Jacobins Club, their hostess accompanied them, to advertize to the people her position as the inspirer of the campaign.

Theresia Cabarrus had inherited from her injudicious parents a passion for luxury and pleasure which her remarkable beauty gave her every opportunity of gratifying. Married at fourteen,

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she had exhausted her capacity for adventure by the time the advent of Bonaparte put an end to her reign—and she was then but twenty-six. Twice imprisoned, twice divorced, mother of ten children, she lived to see the departure of Napoleon and the return of the Bourbons. She died at Chimay at the age of sixty-two, poor, ill, neglected, but repenting sincerely of her wild life, and reconciled to the Church. Yet, though her morals were detestable, it was incurable frivolity rather than an evil nature which led her into her adventures. She had been taught too young to receive flattery and exaggerated admiration, and had been allowed to hear the loose talk of society and to mix as an equal with her elders, before her character was sufficiently developed to protect her from contamination. At the height of her fame, she was no worse than her contemporaries, but her beauty, her grace, her vivacity, and her genius for personal adornment made her the most conspicuous of the group over which she presided. She had the courage to use her influence over Tallien in Bordeaux to rescue many of the hunted and the proscribed, and she never hesitated to do a kindness. Madame de la Tour du Pin has described how she appealed to her for help at a very difficult moment, and how that help was offered. The Marquise, who was not given to exaggeration, has left a page which shows the impression created by Theresia at this time. Her complexion, her smile, her hair, her form were perfection itself. Her movements revealed a matchless grace, her voice was melodious. She made one think of Diana the Huntress—and the Marquise, I am sure, intended no malicious jest in the use of that noun. Such was the young woman whom so many writers have called the Queen of the Directory.

## III

A few months after Thermidor the émigrés began to slip quietly across the frontier into France. Some came in disguise, others had acquired false papers. A few risked everything, and returned openly, confident that by joining the popular movement against the Jacobins, they would avoid enquiries into their past, and hoping that they might even get back their property. They

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found, among the Muscadins, royalist leaders from the Vendée and the departments of the West, and in the mixed gatherings at la Chaumière, disillusioned veterans of the Revolution who, provided there was no return to the old régime, would have willingly welcomed back even the Bourbons. They discovered that the party of Fréron and Tallien was not exclusively composed of terrorists and regicides and that the leaders themselves, since their only aim was power and money, did not care who joined them, and were not troubled by what was a noticeable swing to the right among their followers. For Fréron and his colleagues had made strange allies. Many of the journalist who supported them took no great pains to hide their royalist sentiments. Barras would have sold himself as cheerfully to a Bourbon as to anyone else, always supposing that the price was a good one, and that the deal carried with it a guarantee of indemnity for past misdeeds. Nor did the disreputable adventurers who, while following public opinion, appeared to be leading it, care a sou what Government France had, provided places were found for them and their friends. The cry, "Down with the Jacobins!" might have a narrow and personal significance for Fréron and Tallien, but to the mass of the people the cry meant, down with all terrorists, and to the masked royalists it meant, down with the brutality and corruption of the whole revolutionary movement. Even the frenzy of feasting and dancing and love-making, so natural a result of the breaking of a terrible strain and the ending of a long agony of mind, favoured the royalist reaction. Intelligent men might find the grossness and the greed of the newly enriched more degrading than the profligacy of the old Court. But there were others, men of humble origin, whose grievances against privilege and wealth and ease began to lose their virulence when they came into contact with these things; or men who had been whole-hearted in their support of the Revolution, and were now forced into a cynical admission that it was very pleasant to mix with those who had a taste in dress, a certain sophistication, an air of confidence, and formal manners.

Watching this extraordinary scene of luxury and misery, of feasting and bread queues, were men and women who thought that if this was the result of the Revolution, then popular opinion would of necessity come to condemn what it had supported. Those

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who had held moderate liberal views in 1789 now saw those views justified, and hoped that the behaviour of the governing clique and its parasites would open the eyes of the nation and lead quickly to a restoration of the Monarchy ; but a constitutional Monarchy. It seemed to them that all that was lost when Barnave and the Feuillants were tricked and betrayed by Marie-Antoinette might even now be retrieved. They saw the Revolution ending, after all, with a King on the throne again, ready to grant reasonable reforms, to acknowledge that the demands made in the *cahiers* had been just demands, and to guarantee that there should be no return to the abuses which had been abolished. The moderates were further encouraged by the policy of conciliation adopted by the Convention in dealing with the West, and by the decree separating Church from State. This latter decree was interpreted as an authorization to practise the Catholic religion openly once more.

The exiled Princes and émigrés might have won the support of this large body of moderate opinion which, though not organized as a party, represented all who, in '89, had wanted reform rather than revolution, and had by now realized that to obtain the abolition of privilege they had had to see their religion persecuted and their King killed. For the moderates had never been enthusiastic for a Republic, and everything that had happened to them since the taking of the Bastille had led them rather to prefer a constitutional Monarchy. Unfortunately, in the world of the exiles, where there was no compromise, the moderates were hated as virulently as the Jacobins. Without the excuse of Fersen, mad for personal revenge, the émigrés still believed that their country must be brought to heel in the old manner, as though they were still dealing with their serfs.

Early in 1795 there were signs that the broad outlines of the coming struggle were being drawn. In the Centre there would be a group which would be forced to veer now right, now left, in order to keep a balance between the Royalists and the extreme Jacobins. But the dominating party would always consist of the men who had the strongest interest in retaining power ; the three hundred surviving regicides, and those attached to them by friendship or by interest.



Such was the political situation after Thermidor. But the majority of people, contrary to what is imagined by demagogues, planners, agitators, and publicists, are seldom interested in politics except in so far as they interfere with their private lives. France had experienced, in a few short years, what should have been a slow process of change. The traditions and the habits of many centuries had been swept away in a storm that was the more violent for being so brief. A noble passion for justice had met and marched with the basest lust of hatred. The majestic voices of idealists had mixed with the ignoble clamour of careerists. Every human passion from the most exalted to the most degraded had raged for five years, until the fanatics had destroyed each other in the name of the people. And after all these hopes and despairs, after the tremendous effort of destruction, and the defeated dream of a City that was to arise by magic from the ruins of the old France, the country was like a patient awakened from the delirium of fever. There was a lassitude, an apathy, which, with returning strength, became anger. The workmen in the towns discovered that there was no work for them, and that the flood of paper money, against which Saint-Just had protested so eloquently, had ruined the country economically. In all the large towns, but particularly in Paris, there was a hideous contrast between the life of luxury and debauchery led by the profiteers, and the struggle for existence of the starving masses. The winter of 1794-5 was unusually severe. The poor who stood in queues for an ounce of indifferent bread, a few sticks to make a fire, or a miserable coat, saw the courtiers of Cabarrus in their carriages, and heard all round them the strains of dance-music. For Paris was full of dancing-halls and gambling-rooms, where those with any money could forget the general misery and instability for a few hours. Outside the towns the peasants had some reason for contentment. The Revolution had given them land, and had removed a hundred little feudal tyrannies. Agriculture was in a healthy state, but the peasants, too, had their anxieties. Though not hungry, like the workmen, they suffered

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from the disorganization of the administrative machine, from the neglected roads, infested with bandits, and from the universal conviction that nothing was settled, nothing founded. A second Revolution was a possibility, so was a counter-revolution. They wanted neither. They wanted only to enjoy in peace what they had got out of the sale of the nobleman's estates, and to be allowed to practise their religion undisturbed. They were firmly attached to the Revolution, some by mere interest, others for a loftier reason, but for the Republic they cared nothing. They, like their brothers in the towns and in the Army, detested the politicians in power, but the energy of the revolutionary years was exhausted, and their attitude to misgovernment was one of gloomy tolerance. The soldiers, too, were satisfied with what the Revolution had done for them. For the humblest recruit the army was now not a servitude but a career. Victory had given them a proud bearing, they were devoted to their Generals, and in them remained the old ardour of '89, the hope, the vision. In them also, more than in any other section of the nation, there was devotion to the Republic as an idea, but by no means to the men in power.

It would seem, at a first glance, that, in this year 1795, the Monarchy might have made for itself an opportunity for a welcome return. The tide of feeling was setting against the faction in power, but what alternative Government was in sight? Only that crowd of more extreme Jacobins who lived in perpetual rancour and conspiracy, knowing that so long as they were excluded from the Government, their lives were insecure. The Catholic revival in so many departments was, in some sense, a royalist revival, and large numbers of middle-class people, who had lost their King and their religion through the Revolution, were as embittered as the peasants against those who had closed their churches and killed their King. Monarchy had been, for long centuries, taken for granted. The greatness of France, her prosperity, her happiness, had been built on this foundation. A plebiscite would have saved the life of Louis XVI, so attached, even at that stage of the Revolution, were the people to the idea of Monarchy. Let the reader bring his mind back to the beginnings of the upheaval, when so many hoped that Louis would

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place himself at the head of a new France, having granted the reforms demanded. In how short a time that tradition of Monarchy was broken completely, and a new strange thing substituted for it! But a tradition is not quickly forgotten and the memory of Kingship was in the blood of the French. Furthermore, he whom so many called Louis XVII, was known to be alive in the Temple prison. In January, 1795, Cambacérés, realizing what a rallying point this child might be if released, had urged his continued imprisonment; which was a sentence of death. With the country afraid of the future, and too exhausted even to hope, might not the return of the Monarchy have been greeted with resignation, and later, after convalescence, with enthusiasm?

No. To the French the return of the Monarchy meant one thing, to the Princes and the more foolish among the royalists it meant another thing. Artois, Provence, Condé, and their advisers in exile were determined to restore the old régime. Privilege was to be re-established. The guilty were to be punished. All the work of the Revolution was to be undone, and the life of the nation was to be resumed at the point where it had been interrupted in 1789. Now all this was a plain warning to the Jacobins in power, and to all who had acquired the land of the exiles or the property of the Church. Their one condition for accepting Louis XVIII would have been a complete amnesty for all that had been done in the five years, and a guarantee that what anybody held he should be allowed to keep. And the Army was on the side of the Revolution. The unbelievably stupid conduct of the exiled Bourbons made it evident that, if the Monarchy returned, it would not be to consolidate the social changes of the Revolution, but to re-impose the detested system against which France had risen. The knowledge of this fact deepened the despair in France. Jacobins and émigrés were equally repulsive to the mass of the people, but they preferred to endure the present evil than to invite the possibility of further strife and bloodshed, ending only in the reimposition of the old oppressive rule. The royalist Malouet, who said so many notable things of this period, remarked: "We shall only get back our Monarchy after we have seen a usurper seize power and hold the

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reins for, possibly, a considerable time." A year earlier Catherine of Russia had written: "If France gets out of her mess, she will be as quiet as a lamb. But what she needs is a man of superior character, talented, brave, towering above his contemporaries, and perhaps over the entire country. Is such a man alive?"

The death, on June 8th, 1795, of the Dauphin, gave the future Louis XVIII his chance to reassure not only the mass of the people, who might have accepted a constitutional Monarchy, but also the moderate Royalists, who remembered the effect of Brunswick's insolent manifesto. He had already made the blunder of calling himself the Regent, even while the Dauphin was alive. But he now surpassed his previous follies. From Verona came a manifesto, promising the restoration of the old régime, the punishment of all who had either taken a leading part in the Revolution, or benefited in any way from it. And in case there might linger any doubt about the restored King's purpose, his courtiers lost no time in elaborating his words—in the manner, for instance, of that young fool who talked to Benjamin Constant, a year previously, of executing 800,000 people; or of d'Antraigues who said: "I will be the Marat of the Counter-Revolution and will cut off 500,000 heads." The one thought which all the exiled émigrés, counselled by their master and counselling him, had in common was revenge. And the one thought which united the Jacobins and the peasants, the army and the profiteers, was avoidance of revenge. Meanwhile Artois, the future Charles X, that charming but empty braggart, played his part in discrediting the Bourbons. The awakening of hope in the Vendée led d'Andigné to suggest a landing, led by a Prince. The English took the matter in hand, but Artois failed to turn up at Quiberon, and the failure of the expedition still further discouraged the royalists.

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exacerbated by the insurrection of Prairial. Being an artilleryman who at the age of forty-five was still only a Captain, Aubry had an additional cause of rancour when he interviewed Bonaparte, and he offered him a brigade of Infantry. By applying for sick leave Bonaparte avoided taking up the command. He preferred to live on half-pay until the hostility against him had died down. So, discontented and bored, he settled down to the bohemian life which might have suited a second-rate artist but was galling to a man of his active brain and soaring imagination.

It may seem a small matter that Bonaparte should have received the offer of a brigade of Infantry with contempt, but Marmont, an Artillery officer himself, makes it plain in his Memoirs that any gunner would have had the same feelings. A transfer to the Infantry was regarded as a step down. Marmont had no sympathy with this attitude but recognized its existence. However, when he saw that Bonaparte intended to wait for more congenial employment, he applied to be sent to the Army of the Rhine, which was then before Mayence.

Bonaparte was gay and gloomy, despairing and hopeful by turns. At one moment he is Rodolphe or Marcel in the attic, and cries: "*La vie est un songe léger, qui se dissipe.*" At the next he is saying: "I shall end by not troubling to avoid the next carriage that comes along." His poverty and his physical sufferings have often been exaggerated. What tortured him was that he could not see any future ahead of him. The stupid suspicions which had cut short his career continued to hold him back, and he could find no way of dealing with them. He was never a man who minded living rough, and food and drink were no more than necessities to him. When money was short, Junot usually had some to spare. If he had not, he gambled, and they shared the winnings, so that Bonaparte was always able to spare something for his mother. The two young men took long walks together. In the warm evenings they would go to the Jardins des Plantes, to talk to the curator Daubenton, the intimate friend of Junot's uncle. There they would go slowly round the green-houses, examining the rare specimens, or along the paths bordered with trees and flowers and shrubs, and the restless spirit of Bonaparte would be calmed for a while. One evening Junot

revealed that he was passionately in love with Paulette Bonaparte, and wanted to marry her. In the gardens, Bonaparte had offered no objection to the match and had discussed the matter in such a way as to make Junot hopeful. But the influence of the quiet gardens was dissipated when they were once more in the noisy streets, and the problems which had been forgotten, returned. Bonaparte said: "You've got nothing. Paulette's got nothing. Total: nothing. You can't marry yet. Let us wait a while. Perhaps better days will come. Yes, better days will come, even if I have to set out for another part of the world to find them."

His anxieties at this period were not confined to his own affairs. In his letters to Joseph we can follow the pains he was taking to help his family, of whom he writes as though he were their affectionate father. Louis, Lucien, Jérôme were in his thoughts all the time, and when his mission to Turkey was being considered, he hoped to get an appointment for Joseph, whom he clearly loved best of them all. Envyng Joseph his ordered life, since his marriage to Julie Clary, he had momentarily serious thoughts of marrying her sister, but more from loneliness than from any passion for her. They corresponded. Désirée Clary asks him for his portrait, but after that there are no more letters for a while, and Bonaparte asks Joseph for news of her, and complains of her silence. Then she writes again, and Bonaparte mentions that he is thinking of marriage and would appreciate the good offices of his brother. For by this time he is working in the topographical bureau at the Committee of Public Safety. But nothing comes of the affair, and he was probably not very serious in his intentions. Had he really been in love with her, as he was later in love with Josephine, he would have gone to her instead of wasting time with letters. Désirée, who might have been an Empress, married Bernadotte and became Queen of Sweden.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When Joseph had married Julie, and Bonaparte was corresponding with Désirée, the father of the girls, a prosperous merchant of Marseilles, said, "No, no. One poor Bonaparte in my family is enough." Bonaparte never forgot her. He said: "If Bernadotte became a Marshal or a Prince, it was because of his marriage." This emphasizes the probability that it was because of Désirée that Bernadotte's conduct at Auerstaedt, at Wagram and at Walcheren did not get him disgraced.

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There was living in Paris at this time in the rue Filles-St.-Thomas, a Corsican lady, Madame Permon, who had been on terms of close friendship with Madame Bonaparte and her family. This lady's daughter, Laure, was to marry Junot and become the Duchesse d'Abrantès. To her house the two young men would often go, and Laure Permon has left us a description of Bonaparte as he appeared to her in 1795. She found him ugly—far too thin and angular, and with an unhealthy yellowish skin. He carried no gloves, thinking such things a waste of money, and his boots were generally dirty. He would come in on a rainy evening, and sit down among the family with his wet and muddy boots stretched out to the fire ; a habit which displeased Madame Permon so much that, after a while, Bonaparte used to get a maid-servant to wipe the mud off before he came into the room. Two things about him made a profound impression on Laure Permon, and they are the two things which struck everybody else who came in contact with him now or later in his life. One was the charm of his manner, when he made an effort to be gracious, and particularly the sudden smile which transformed his features. The other was his extremely sensitive pride.

He was unhappy and full of resentment, but his brain was busy with schemes, and he spent much of his time trying to get some kind of military employment. For it became a question either of going to the Vendée or of finding himself one day crossed off the list of officers and with no means of support. In the nick of time a piece of good fortune came his way. Pontécoulant succeeded Aubry at the Committee of Public Safety and, after an interview with Bonaparte, had him attached to the topographical bureau of the Committee's military department. He at once sent in two memoranda ; and they were studied with considerable interest, for they contained a fuller exposition of his ideas on the Italian campaign, which he had first put on paper in the previous year ; in them was the basis of the plan which he carried out in '96 : the attack across the Ligurian hills and into the Lombard plain. But though he had found in Pontécoulant a man who could recognize his value and who seemed ready to help and encourage him, the old enmities still pursued him. In the various departments and committees dealing with

the conduct of the war were men who were intent on snubbing him and even ruining him, because they persisted in remembering his Jacobin connections in the past. And he himself had put another weapon in their hands by refusing to obey the order to proceed to the Army of the West. They saw no reason why this unpopular young officer should be privileged to pick and choose his appointments, and they were determined not to do what he hoped they would do—send him back to Italy, to take up his old post. Realizing that even his present unsatisfactory employment was precarious and, in any case, did not give him the scope he required for the exercise of his talents, he began to consider seriously the possibility that there was no career for him in France. Already, the idea of going to some other part of the world had occurred to him. As we know, he had spoken to Junot in this strain in one of their rambles in Paris. When, therefore, he heard that the Sultan in Constantinople had asked the French Government to send him a military mission, which should include a number of Artillery officers who were required to re-organize that arm of the Turkish forces, he snatched at the chance. The East had always stirred his imagination and set him dreaming. Furthermore—and this was no small consideration—the pay would be good. It would mean better days for the family, of which he already regarded himself as the head. He sent in his application.

Pontécoulant passed on the application, with some very flattering remarks in the margin. In order to have two strings to his bow, Bonaparte once more asked to be posted to an Artillery command. He had not long to wait for an answer. Pontécoulant left the Committee and, at the same time, the answer to his two demands was delivered by the Committee of Public Safety, presided over by Cambacérès, in the shape of a decree erasing his name from the list of serving officers, because he had refused to take up his post in the Vendée. But the various departments of the Committee appear to have been completely out of touch with one another. A member, Debry, had advised, with reference to the application for the Turkish post, that this distinguished officer should not be allowed to leave the Republic at such a moment, but that, if he insisted, the matter should be



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discussed fully. And on the day when his name was removed from the list of officers, a decree of the military committee placed him in command of the military mission to Turkey. He paid more attention to the second decree than to the first, and began to make arrangements for his departure. Junot and Marmont were, of course, to accompany him. But while he was preparing, in high spirits, for his journey to Turkey, he was keeping an eye on the situation in Paris. He saw, as everybody saw, that the crisis was approaching. He was, as Bainville says, a soldier of fortune, and prepared to take what came his way. At any rate he remained in Paris as the autumn days passed, still talking of the Turkish journey, still making his plans for the mission, but keeping himself informed of the situation in the capital as it developed. It is even possible that he would have offered himself to the royalists had they approached him. When the insurrection of Vendémiaire was over he said to Junot, with a laugh, that if the Sections had put him at their head, he would have given the deputies a shock.

How much or how little of the great epic was in his mind, shadowy and formless, in those days when he went, poor and angry, up and down the streets of Paris? Already he believed in his star—he had used the expression to Madame Permon. Already men recognized in him a quality of leadership which inspired not only devotion but unbounded admiration; and women, some force which disturbed and troubled them. Fragments of his conversations remain, and letters, showing him now cynical, now afire with ambition, but nearly always confident that he had been born for high undertakings. But we cannot follow him to the rue de la Huchette, or watch him as he stands by the window in his candle-lit room, looking into the darkness. The “unknown Bonaparte” who preceded Napoleon, and so profoundly stirred the imagination of Chateaubriand, will remain for ever unknown.

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Insurrection of Prairial ; the Quiberon Expedition ; Vendémiaire*

##### I

THE people of Paris had become accustomed to hunger, but in the early days of the Revolution they had had the hope of better lives to come. They had their trusted leaders, and they knew that the armed forces were their brothers and would never consent to be used against them. Now, in 1795, their hope had gone. They trusted no politician. They began to regret, in conversation, the great days when they were promised so much, and in such stirring phrases, and they said openly that they had been tricked. In the early months of 1795, the cold and windy months, during which hunger and exasperation became more acute, the faubourgs were astir again. From the grey seventeenth century buildings of St. Antoine came murmurs of revolt, Outside the house of Santerre the brewer there were meetings, and all along the rue de Lappe the women were urging their men to put an end to an unbearable situation ; to march on the Convention and insist on a distribution of bread, and to drive from the streets the Dandies, whom Béranger called the hermaphrodites. These perfumed and powdered youngsters, with their enormous coloured cravats, their ear-rings, and their affected airs, who for all their fierce looks "were changed into women at the beat of a drum," were as heartily loathed as ever were the foreign mercenaries of Louis XVI.

On March 17th a deputation from St. Marceau visited the Convention, to demand bread. They were offered the usual vague promise by Boissy d'Anglas—whom they later nicknamed Boissy-Famine. In the days that followed there were several more deputations, and it was noticed that there was growing unrest in the streets. In the Convention there were men capable of reading the situation, but their advice was disregarded.

Lecointre, for instance, called for the putting into force of the Constitution of '93, as a means of assuring settled Government, and of preventing popular outbreaks. He was disregarded, but his words spread outside the Convention, and people recalled the enthusiasm with which this truly democratic Constitution, which had remained a document, had been greeted two years ago. A few days later there were cries of "Bread, bread, and the Constitution of 'Ninety-Three.'" But Tallien and his friends preferred bloodshed. On April 1st a noisier and angrier crowd invaded the Hall of the Convention. The demonstrators were unarmed, but the National Guard had to be summoned to persuade them to go away. That night the Convention decreed that Paris was in a state of siege, and Pichegru was given the command of the garrison troops. At the same time, the incident was used as a pretext for deporting Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, and Barère to Guiana, and for imprisoning or executing other members of the two Committees and noted men of Thermidor. But the people were still hungry. Convoys of grain, on their way to the capital, were being pillaged on the country roads; wagons were stopped and overturned in the streets of Paris. The police were unable to control the crowds, and the old revolutionary Sections were in session once more. The deputies could no longer appease the people with promises or with cries of "Vive la République!" when petitions were presented. A representative of the Quinze-Vingts section had put the matter plainly and bluntly to the Convention. "Thermidor was to be the salvation of the people, but the people is still the victim of every manœuvre. We were promised that the suppression of the Maximum would bring us abundance of food, but a famine is raging; the people want their liberty. They know that, when they are oppressed, insurrection is their duty, according to an article in the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Why is Paris without a municipal governing body? Why are the popular societies closed? Where are the harvests? Why is the paper currency debased day by day? Why is it only the fanatics and the young men of the Palais-Royal who are allowed to meet in assembly? We demand, if justice be not an empty word, the punishment or the release of prisoners. We demand

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the employment of every possible means to heal the terrible distress of the people, to give them back their rights, and to apply at once the Constitution of '93. We have risen to uphold the Republic and Liberty." To this brief statement of the causes of the people's discontent the Convention could not have returned a reasonable answer. But it could have avoided making matters worse. Thibault replied: "There are three things that should never be discussed in public: finance, food, religion." On the 20th of May, the tocsin answered this contemptuous speech.

The insurrection of Prairial (May 20th-22nd) was, to a certain extent, organised. In the Town Hall, the old insurrectionary headquarters, a committee sat. Leaflets and placards were printed and posted on walls, and a manifesto was issued. It set forth the grievances of the people and then, under the heading, "The people decree the following," announced its aims in eleven articles. Article One was as follows:—

- I. Bread.
- II. The abolition of the revolutionary Government, which is used by each faction in turn to ruin, starve, and enslave the people.
- III. The proclamation by the National Convention and the immediate establishment of the Constitution of '93.
- IV. The dismissal of the present Government, and its immediate replacement by other deputies of the National Convention, and the arrest of the members composing the present Government committees, as being guilty of the crime of *lèse-nation* and tyranny over the people.
- V. The immediate setting at liberty of citizens imprisoned for demanding bread and expressing their opinion frankly.
- VI. The summoning of primary assemblies on the 25th Priarial, to re-elect all the authorities who, until that time, must act constitutionally.
- VII. The summoning of the National Legislative Assembly, to replace the Convention, on the 25th Messidor.

Article X said: "The rallying cry of the people is 'Bread and the Constitution of '93,'" and laid down that those words must be chalked on the hats of the insurrectionaries, and on their banners.

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This time the mob had procured arms from arsenals and guard-houses and, to the sound of the tocsin and the beat of drums, the great crowd began to move towards the Tuileries, while Isabeau, who had procured the Manifesto, read it to the Convention. The people on the benches reserved for the public applauded and cheered. Whereupon the deputies swore to die at their posts. Then, in spite of all that had happened in March and April, they began, in ridiculous speeches, to attribute the rising of the people to everything but hunger and infuriation. Some said it was a royalist conspiracy, others that it had been prepared in the Convention itself. The people were asked to be patient, and deputies were despatched to explain to the starving that they were being exploited by their enemies.

The speeches were interrupted by the incursion of the mob, and all attempts to reassure the people were drowned by repeated cries of "Bread and the Constitution of '93!" They were forced out of the hall by police and troops, but the Carrousel and the surrounding streets were filled with a howling mass of men and women, and by weight of numbers they broke in again. The deputy Férand, attempting to shield Boissy d'Anglas, was shot dead by a woman. The mob, under the impression that it was Fréron who had been killed, dragged the body out into the streets, where a young wine-merchant cut off the head of the corpse and flung it to those nearest to him. Inside the Convention a hand to hand fight was going on. In the gardens of the Tuileries the Dandies had been assembled, but they had no taste for a brawl in which they themselves might get hurt. The National Guard apparently made no attempt to interfere with the crowds in the gardens, and reinforcements for the insurgents were continually arriving. This state of affairs lasted all through the day and far into the night, until exhaustion forced a lull. But before the deputies separated for the night Fréron, Tallien, Bourdon, and their friends had succeeded in fixing the responsibility for the disturbance on what remained of the Mountain. It was the pretext for arresting Goujon, Romme, and half a dozen others.

The next morning, no sooner had the deputies taken their places than news was brought that the mob had captured the Town Hall and was forming a Government. This news, which was false,

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exactly corresponded with what Fréron and Tallien wished to establish as the truth. But when a column of troops marched on the Town Hall, they were met and routed by the Sections, who were on their way to the Convention again, with the same cry on their lips, Bread and the Constitution of '93. The 'conspiracy' which the extremist deputies were trying to invent was what it appeared to be on the surface—an uprising of hungry and infuriated people, who demanded food and sound laws. During this day, May 21st, there were encounters and scuffles all over Paris, and rowdy scenes in the Convention, but by evening the relations between the deputies and the spokesmen of the mob became friendly. The people continued to make their demands, but the deputies were more ingratiating, and repeated their promises. On May 22nd the Dandies decided that it would be safe for them to take a hand in the affair, since the troops which had marched into Paris were now ready to act. They accordingly set off for the St. Antoine quarter, giving themselves the airs of soldiers. There they were surrounded, but nobody harmed the effeminate creatures, and they were rescued, without bloodshed, by General Menou. Meanwhile Kilmaine, Montchoisi, and Dubois overcame the last knots of resistance and restored order in the capital. By May 23rd the Convention felt strong enough to refuse to receive deputations, and set about its policy of repression. Military intervention had saved the Government. The precedent was to be remembered.

The chief lesson to be learnt from these days was that the Army, which had hitherto been on the side of the people, was now ready to act against the people, on the orders of the Government. What had made the Revolution possible was the King's certainty that the troops would not obey an order to fire on the crowd. From this moment the politicians had only one more occasion to fear the menace of marching mobs. The old tradition of the street in arms was broken. A military commission disarmed the rioters, imprisoned large numbers, and sentenced many to death. The Convention threw more Jacobins into prison, and condemned others to death. The misery of Paris increased. Tallien and Fréron had made themselves secure.

But there was danger from the Right as well as from the Left.

## BRUMAIRE: THE RISE OF BONAPARTE

Artois was at his boasting. He was going to return to France, and to re-establish the Monarchy, with all its privileges. Artois had an attractive presence and a ready tongue and there were many royalist leaders ready to listen to him and to believe him. His constant talk of an expedition, backed and financed by the English, kept alive the hopes of the West, and even his repeated excuses and postponements could not completely discourage them. They held themselves ready for the arrival of their Prince.

### II

Robespierre was not dead two months when a Royalist envoy arrived in London to put before the English Government plans for a rising in Brittany, and to ask for aid. He was Joseph de Puisaye, a forty-year-old nobleman from Mortagne, in the Perche country of Normandy. Royalist writers have defended him from the charge of having induced the English to fall in with the project he suggested by exaggerating the readiness of the West to undertake another insurrection. He spoke of being able to guarantee one hundred thousand men, and was sure of being able to seduce not only Republican regiments but even Republican Generals—even Hoche. At any rate, he persuaded his listeners that, with their help, it would be an easy matter for an expedition to seize the tongue of land which formed one side of the Bay of Quiberon, and was protected by only one fort. After a surprise landing, the expedition would proceed inland, in the direction of Rennes. Auray, Vannes, and the other towns of the district would fall rapidly, and the Breton troops would join the invaders. Charette, Stofflet, Frotté, and the other leaders would bring in troops from neighbouring departments, while Condé created a diversion in the Franche-Comté. At a suitable moment Artois would disembark and the Monarchy would be restored. On paper it sounds well, and in conversation it seemed promising enough to the English Government. The scheme might have succeeded—Royalist writers are certain that it would have succeeded—had it not failed.

Puisaye remained in London while the preparation of the expedition was taken in hand. By the beginning of June, the transports

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gathered at Southampton and Portsmouth were taking on provisions and equipment, and arms and stores were being accumulated on the quays. Forged paper money had not been forgotten. The troops also were assembling, but recruitment among refugees, prisoners-of-war, deserters, had not been very successful. There were already quarrels over the various commands, and the 12,000 troops which had been collected were, with singular stupidity, divided into three convoys which were to sail on three separate dates. The first, consisting of 5,000 troops, was ready to sail by June 6th, and Puisaye received from the Admiralty secret instructions, confirming him in the supreme command of the troops and setting forth the reason why England was willing to equip and pay for the expedition—so that the French noblemen might join the Breton insurgents and overthrow the Republic. At the same time other secret instructions were handed to Admiral Warren, who commanded the squadron charged with the protection of the convoy. He was informed that d'Hervilly was in command of the troops and would be accompanied by Puisaye. On June 10th the first convoy put to sea, just too soon to hear that on June 8th the Dauphin had died in the Temple prison.

Admiral Warren's orders were to sail into the Bay of Quiberon, and put the troops ashore, and the actual landing, after a quarrel between Puisaye and d'Hervilly, was made on the shore of a little bight called the Anse de Carnac, where Cadoudal and his Chouans greeted the exiles. But the enthusiasm of the Breton peasants soon cooled when they realized that the two leaders were wasting time with their personal quarrel instead of marching inland. The Republican officials in the towns of the district fell into a panic, but Hoche read the situation with a more expert eye, and from Vannes he informed them that he would soon have the situation in hand.

While the incompetent Puisaye was writing letters, which were ignored, to the English Ministers, the troops made another landing, on the peninsula of Quiberon, which they occupied. The peninsula was protected by the Fort de Penthièvre, and should have made a better base for munitions and supplies than Carnac. Moreover, Hoche lacked artillery for an attack on the fort. But thanks to the contradictory orders among the Royalists, and the



incapacity of their leaders, the noblemen, on July 16th, were defeated in a battle. The second convoy, under de Sombreuil, which might have saved the situation, had set sail on July 9th. D'Hervilly, who refused its aid, was mortally wounded in the fighting.

With d'Hervilly out of the way, the incompetent Puisaye not only assumed command but wrote a pusillanimous letter to England, asking for English troops, and hinting, most unwarrantably, that the disaster was due to a lack of fighting quality in the French troops, instead of so largely to his own shortcomings. De Sombreuil disembarked his men but everybody knew now that the expedition was a miserable failure. To make matters worse, the soldiers so unwisely recruited from the English prisons began to desert and were able to let the Republicans know the hopeless condition of Puisaye's command. On July 19th Hoche sent Humbert to attack the fort and drive the invaders off the peninsula. Puisaye refused to take Sombreuil's advice, and the Royalists, again fighting magnificently, were again decisively beaten. Puisaye fled, and got aboard an English ship. Sombreuil took command, and, to avoid further slaughter, agreed to capitulate. He asked mercy for all his companions, and offered his own life in return. Hoche, having won his victory, handed over the negotiations to Tallien and Blad, who promised that de Sombreuil alone would be executed. The royalists laid down their arms.

According to Rouget de Lisle, who went with Tallien to Paris, Tallien was determined to get the Convention to ratify the arrangement he had made with de Sombreuil. But Theresia Cabarrus sent Lanjuinais to warn him that he was already suspected of lukewarm behaviour in this affair. Tallien thereupon not only went back on his word, but told a hideous lie to save himself—a story of poisoned daggers used by the *émigrés*. Tallien returned to Brittany, and eight hundred prisoners were killed. Charette, as a reprisal, had three hundred Republican prisoners shot without trial. Hoche, disgusted at the work of Tallien and Blad, was discreet in his condemnation of what had been done.

The high hopes raised by the news of the preparation of this expedition were largely due to the belief that Artois himself would come with the noblemen and place himself at their head. The Breton peasants had expected this, and had once more been

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disappointed. But this sordid affair gave the faction in power in Paris an opportunity which they were not slow to seize. They could now demonstrate to the routed Jacobins their impartiality, and kill all rumours that they were inclined to favour the royalists. The unsavoury Tallien was the instrument chosen for this demonstration. It was work more fitting for him and his henchmen than for soldiers, and some of the officers appointed to the military commissions had no stomach for their task. One of them, Douillard, refused to sit, and explained that, much as he hated royalists, and strong as was his devotion to the Republic, he could not condemn men who had honourably surrendered. That was not a soldier's business.

And then, at the end of August, after wasting two months, the third convoy set sail from Portsmouth, carrying three or four thousand English troops—and Artois. Charette had been warned of his approach. For twelve days the squadron hugged the island of Houët, opposite the bay of Quiberon. Artois spent three hours on the island. There were interviews with royalist leaders, messages exchanged, a great deal of coming and going, and a great deal of talking, but nothing was done. Now and then there was a half-hearted reconnaissance, but the Republican troops were evidently ready, and the idea of a landing was abandoned. The coast was found to be well-guarded. Villaret-Joyeuse reported that the peasants, once more disillusioned, had begun to go home, instead of answering appeals to rally to the royalist standard. The Morbihan having proved a disappointment, the squadron set sail, and the same pantomime was repeated off the coast of Poitou. The Bay of Bourgneuf was chosen for a possible landing. But Grouchy was there, and Hoche had taken precautions at all the likely places. Noirmoutier was approached on September 25th. There was an exchange of shots and nothing more. But Charette was trying to get to the coast. On the 26th he was driven back. The squadron hung about for four days and then moved off again on its travels. Artois decided to occupy a barren rock called the island of Yeu, and to fortify it. He then went back to Bourgneuf, while every day Hoche was bringing up more troops. Charette appeared to be the last hope, and the squadron went back to Yeu to wait for something to happen. After six weeks

of this foolery the *moral* of the English troops was low. Food was short, and every man could see for himself that a landing was now impossible. Artois sent messages to Charette, but received no replies. Hoche was watching. October passed into November. Neither Artois nor Charette could make a move. Meanwhile in the English House of Commons there had been considerable criticism of the entire expedition. At the end of October Sheridan and Fox had both talked of their country's tarnished honour in this futile affair, and it was probably to put an end to such talk that Pitt ordered the squadron back to Spithead, "to wait for more favourable circumstances." Charette had behaved with loyalty and patience. His reward was a handsome sabre from his master. Engraved on the blade were the words, "I Never Yield." Charette is said to have replied: "Tell the Prince he has sent me my death-warrant."

Naturally enough, England has been blamed for the failure of the expedition, and it was certainly badly planned. Nor does it seem that the English Government cared very much whether it succeeded or not. But it is unreasonable to suggest that they would have been willing to spend so much money and risk the prestige of English ships and troops unless they had, at the beginning, believed success to be possible. But there was dishonesty as well as incompetence. The contradictory orders to Puisaye and to Warren, with the consequent quarrels between Puisaye and d'Hervilly, had a great deal to do with the failure. The mystery of this blunder is increased by instructions sent to d'Hervilly on June 26th by the Council of Princes, in the name of Provence and Artois. D'Hervilly is invested with the command, and is told not to risk any operation that might endanger the lives of the noblemen. Further, he is told that his commission from the English Government is not perhaps explicit enough, and he is therefore authorized to interpret it in his own fashion. He is recommended to go very slowly, in order to allow Puisaye time to expose his ideas, "which every evidence leads one to believe are hostile to the restoration of the elder branch of the Bourbons." And d'Hervilly is to treat these instructions as secret. On the strength of this it has been put forward that, while both men were monarchists, they wanted different Kings. Charles Robert sums it all up in these words: "England delivered the émigrés to the Revolution, and the

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Revolution butchered them." It was not quite as simple as that.<sup>1</sup>

### III

The two extremist groups of Right and Left had been made temporarily powerless, but the Moderates owed their deliverance to the corrupt group of adventurers whose one political aim was to remain in power. For the moment, easier in their minds, they could turn to a consideration of the new Constitution, prepared by a Committee of eleven deputies. The Committee was composed of tested revolutionaries, but included three or four who were more monarchist than republican.

The most notable absentee from the Committee was the ex-Abbé Sieyès. He was asked to join it but refused. Daunou, the chief architect of the new Constitution, repeated the request for the help of the great theorist. The reply was among his best, so perfectly in character that it gives a portrait of him: "I have studied these matters deeply, but you wouldn't understand me." But though he would not sit on the committee, Sieyès condescended to present certain ideas to the Eleven, which, to his mortification, were rejected by the Convention. If he had had his way the Government which issued from the Constitution would have been even weaker than it was, for, to his contempt for the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, he added a fear of arbitrary action by the executive. His government would have been paralysed from its birth.

The Constitution of 1795 reflected the anxieties and uncertainties of the hour. The men who made it were, for the most part, of moderate opinions, and the completed work was the outcome of their fears. It had to guard against a return of arbitrary rule on the one hand, and on the other against a second revolution of the hungry and disillusioned. The mass of the people might turn right or left at any moment; they might demand a King, or they might find their own Jacobin leaders. To guard against this, the suffrage was restricted to a property basis, men of property,

<sup>1</sup> It is more likely that Pitt was duped by the royalists. Puisaye blamed England for the choice of Quiberon, and quarrelled with Cadoudal. Gabory says that the double command was the result of rivalry between Artois and Provence. The shrewd Mallet du Pan condemns the affair as chivalrous, romantic and useless.

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as Boissy d'Anglas said, being likely to be on the side of order. So the masses were disfranchised. The Legislative consisted of two chambers, the Ancients or Senate, 250 in number, and none under forty years of age, and the Five Hundred, whose minimum age was thirty. The Five Hundred proposed laws, which the Ancients could accept or reject. To the former belonged the initiative, but the latter made the decision. Both these Councils were elected by primary and secondary assemblies. A third of each Council had to retire at the end of every year. The executive was a Directory of five, chosen by the Ancients from a list submitted by the Five Hundred. Every year one Director retired. This body had little real power, since it could only advise the Councils, though it was allowed to appoint Ministers. Nothing but a weak government could have come out of such a Constitution.

The Convention, having adopted this Constitution, had to think of the elections. It was clear that the only interest shown in the affair by the people was due to an illusion that now, at last, there would be a chance of getting rid of the regicides and the men of Thermidor once and for ever. To prevent this, to save themselves from the popular fury, these men had restricted the franchise. They now took a far more audacious step. Tallien and his friends, realizing that they would not be elected, decided to elect themselves. For that is what the new decree, proposed by Tallien, meant. Two-thirds of the new assemblies were to be chosen from the Convention. When the Constitution and the decree were submitted to the country for a plebiscite, the apathy of the country was shown even more remarkably than one would have imagined. For the whole of France, rather over a quarter of a million voted in favour of the decrees, and 95,000 against them. Rioting broke out once more, partly due to the still rapidly rising prices and the hunger of the masses, and partly to the determination not to allow the most unpopular men in the Convention to transfer themselves to the new Chambers. The royalists were equally angry, since the trickery of the Convention had upset their plans for a fusion of themselves with the Moderate Republicans. In the salon of Madame de Staël there was a moment of despair. The more reasonable men of the Right had hoped much from free elections, since they knew that all parties were

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sworn to turn out the old Convention, and were confident that, without bloodshed, and by legal methods, the ground could be slowly prepared for a constitutional monarchy. On the other hand, the royalists who wanted the old régime again, realized that the Army, which regarded them as traitors to their country, would prefer the Convention, and that therefore an insurrection must be carefully organized.

### IV

The resounding failure of Quiberon was a blow from which the royalists quickly recovered. They knew that the trick played by the Convention was resented everywhere, and they determined to use this resentment for their own ends, by assuming the direction of the campaign against the Convention. The old Sections, and especially the royalist Le Pelletier Section, protested against the new decrees and petitioned the Convention. They were told that France had accepted the decrees, which were now law ; a reply which increased the exasperation in the capital. There was talk of arming the people, and it was noted that the Convention had already brought troops into Paris, as though the Government were well aware of the mood of the Parisians. On October 3rd Le Pelletier took the lead and called on the other Sections to join it in defiance of the Convention. Excitement was rising all over Paris, and the deputies realized that, as there was certain to be a clash, it would be wise for them to move first. A Committee of five was set up, with Barras in command. Very unwisely Barras released from the prisons the riff-raff of criminals and called up the worst elements from the streets. The arming of these men was excellent propaganda for the royalists, who were able to represent their own activities as measures of self-defence against a coming massacre. But the employment of such men had a more serious effect than that. It robbed the Convention of what chance they had of suppressing the insurrection before the Sections marched, by disgusting the General in command of the troops, Menou. It was a risk, in any case, to leave this lukewarm Republican in command, but time pressed. When Barras gave him the order, on October 4th, to march on the Le Pelletier Section,

which had its headquarters in the old convent of the Filles-St.-Thomas (where the Bourse stands to-day), Menou found that his troops were to go into action side by side with the mob summoned by Barras. He had now his feelings as a soldier to fortify his sympathy with the Sections, and by his dilatory methods and his half-hearted threats, he merely encouraged the rebels. He delayed his operation as long as he could, and then contented himself with a worthless assurance that the insurgents would disperse if he would withdraw his troops. Meanwhile the royalists, encouraged by Menou's evident distaste for his task, set up a committee under Richer-Sérizy to direct operations. The Convention saw its peril. Between it and the assembling rebels there were a handful of troops, and not a single piece of artillery. All over Paris the drums were beating, the shops had been closed, and the withdrawal of Menou to the Tuileries had encouraged many to join the marching Sections. Barras and his committee knew that it was now a question of meeting an attack. Menou had been relieved of his command. Messages came in that the Sections had already begun to occupy various districts of the capital.

Danican, a Republican who had joined the insurrection, had been given command of the Sections and had made his plan. He seized the Pont-Royal, and before the dawn of October 5th his men began to advance on either side of the river. One column came down the rue du Bac, and turned eastwards along the left bank of the Seine. A second column marched by the boulevards on the right bank. They were to converge on the Carrousel, and then attack the Tuileries. A party had been detached to the camp of Les Sablons, near Neuilly, to seize forty guns. Danican had something like twenty thousand men under him, the majority shopkeepers, clerks, and workmen, with a stiffening of the National Guard, companies of which had joined the Sections. Against him he would have a few thousand troops, and whatever reinforcements could come in from the suburbs in time. Nor were there any guns to oppose him. But he failed to inspire his force with sufficient energy. They advanced too cautiously, and allowed themselves to be halted and discouraged by a fall of rain. A swift and bold advance might have succeeded.

While Danican was advancing too slowly in the darkness, the

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Convention was imploring the Committee to take measures for the defence of the Tuileries. And the first necessity was to find a successor to Menou. Barras remembered that there were a number of officers living in Paris on half-pay, and in disgrace for their connexion with the Robespierre brothers. He sent for them. And among them he recognized one who had distinguished himself at Toulon. His name was Napoleon Bonaparte.

This young soldier's grasp of the elements of the situation, his self-confidence, and his energy led Barras to give him the active command. He saw that the whole affair turned on those guns at the camp of Sablons. Only artillery could disperse so large a force of insurgents, and if they, the insurgents, seized the guns, the defence would collapse. Someone reliable must be sent at once to Les Sablons. Delmas knew of a cavalry officer who would do the work, and he brought him into the room where the committee sat. And so it was that Bonaparte made the acquaintance of his future brother-in-law, and Joachim Murat entered history. One glance was enough to show that this magnificent young Gascon was the man for the job. What he had to do was explained rapidly, and then, with three hundred horsemen, he galloped across Paris. As he drew near the camp he saw, in the first light of dawn, the men of the Sections marching across the plain. It was touch and go. Murat charged, dispersed them, seized the guns, and came clattering back to the Tuileries.

While the men in the Tuileries waited anxiously, arguments broke out. It was a serious matter to open fire on the people, and some said it would mean Civil War all over France. Voices were heard in favour of parleying with the insurgents, and coming to some arrangement that would avoid bloodshed. But Bonaparte had been given his orders and he intended to carry them out. He told the timid that when once he had the guns there would be little bloodshed, and before the debate was finished they heard the rumble of those guns beneath the windows, and Murat came in to report that forty pieces were at the disposal of the defence. Bonaparte then issued his orders.<sup>1</sup> Guns were

<sup>1</sup> Thiébault, who took part in the fighting, speaks of the astonishing activity of Bonaparte, who seemed to be everywhere at once. His manner of giving orders laconically, but with the utmost clarity, quickly restored confidence.



placed at the northern end of the rue St. Nicaise and of the rue du Dauphin, to block the approaches to the Carrousel against those who would come by the rue St. Honoré. Other pieces guarded the Pont-Royal against the detachments on the left bank. The rest were on the Carrousel and at various points close to the Tuileries. Murat, Delmas, and the cavalry were drawn up in what is now the Place de la Concorde, to protect the garden approaches.

Danican had missed his chance. A half-hearted attempt to cross the Pont-Royal failed. There was little fighting. A gun here and there was fired. The insurgents who filled the rue St. Honoré were dispersed with small loss by Bonaparte himself, who commanded in person here and fired at the groups on the steps of the Church of St. Roch. A few cavalry charges cleared the neighbouring streets and the deputies, who had been given arms and ammunition to defend themselves in a last extremity, recovered from their panic. The Government which the people so loathed was saved, and the regicides had the satisfaction of pointing out that the royalists had been behind the insurrection.

There has been much debate on the most famous incident of this day, and even on Bonaparte's appointment<sup>1</sup>; Barras calling him his aide-de-camp, Mathiez calling him Chief of Staff, Madelin calling him the commander of the artillery, and so on. But the one important fact is that he decided the affair by his energy and his instinct for command. In his official report he gave all the credit for the outcome of the day to Barras, which was natural, since Barras had given him this chance of re-starting his career, at the very moment when, in disgust, he was about to leave France on a mission to Turkey, as an artillery instructor. But in the account he dictated of the affair on St. Helena, he gives all the praise to himself—making little, however, of the St. Roch incident. This, also, is natural. His sympathies, in spite of his dislike of insurrections, must have been with the insurgents more than with the discredited men who employed him. As a soldier, and an ambitious one, he was out of employment. He

<sup>1</sup> In a letter which he wrote to Joseph at 2 a.m. of October 6th, Bonaparte says that Barras was appointed by the Convention to command the armed forces of the Government, and that the Committee "chose me as second in command." Thiebault says the same thing.

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took the employment that came his way and obeyed his orders. If, for a long time, the importance of the cannonade of St. Roch was exaggerated, of late years there has been a swing the other way. It has even been suggested that the configuration of the streets would have made it impossible for him to fire on the crowd pressed back on St. Roch. An old map of Paris which lies before me as I write, a map of 1788, shows quite plainly that a gun at the corner of the rue du Dauphin could have swept the steps of the Church.

But there is another point. Murat's seizure of the guns was a decisive, as well as the most picturesque, event of the day. The few battalions of infantry and squadrons of cavalry could not have protected all the approaches to the Tuileries against such a strong force as the insurgents mustered.

By the next day, October 6th, the last remnants of the marchers had been rounded up, and the capital was quiet. The Convention, however, was uneasy. The deputies had no illusions about public opinion. They were in no position to punish the insurgents in the customary manner, though they had no more love for the royalists than for the mob, and were heartily afraid of both. For though they had managed to remain in power, which was their one ambition, they were only back where they had been before, walking the tight-rope. They were not less hated, nor less insecure, and the struggle against Right and Left had to begin all over again. They made some show of punishing the ringleaders. The émigré Lafond was guillotined, but the gaolbirds, the "patriots of '89," went free. The soldiers who had saved the Government were thanked. There was special praise for Bonaparte from Barras, who hoped to use him and from Fréron, who wanted to marry his sister Paulette. General Bonaparte remained in the background, and when his name was mentioned, those about him would have pushed him forward. But Lavalette saw his look and knew that he was ashamed to be praised for prolonging the power of these unsavoury politicians. A few days later they gave him the command of the Army of the Interior and of Paris, and the National Guard was disarmed. The Convention held its last session, and few regretted it, and those who did might console themselves with the thought that

so many of the deputies would turn up again in the two new Chambers. And when the moderate men, who formed the vast majority of France, began to hope that the Directory might be some expression of reactionary opinion, they found that five men had been elected who represented what they most disliked: Barras, Reubell, Sieyès, Letourneur, La Revellière-Lépeaux, every one of whom had voted for the death of Louis XVI.

When the Convention rose for the last time, at half-past two in the afternoon of October 27th, a deputy called out, "*Quelle heure est-il?*" And a voice replied: "*L'heure de la justice?*" That man's watch was fast.

## V

At the end of May, in this year 1795, a day or two after the failure of the Jacobins to overthrow the Convention, Germaine de Staël had come from Switzerland to Paris to rejoin her husband, the Swedish Ambassador, and to re-open her salon in the rue du Bac. This extraordinary woman who, to be happy, had to intoxicate herself with the excitement of political intrigue and the hysteria of frenzied love affairs, brought her newest lover with her, Benjamin Constant, to preach her ideas. These ideas will be found in her "*Réflexions sur la Paix Intérieure*," a remarkable book which resumes in some seventy pages the lessons she drew from what she observed so closely during her stay in Paris. The task of the restless and unbalanced Constant was to convince the Moderates that France had nothing to hope for either from the Jacobins or from the Bourbons; but everything to hope from a Republic ruled by honest intellectuals—by which she meant herself and her friends. France could only be saved by a fusion of the Republicans and the Constitutional Monarchists, who were really much closer to each other than they imagined.

For a month or two Madame de Staël was happy. She was being talked about, she was in love, and she was living in that world of epigram which consoled her for the boredom of Coppet. With all her faults she had a sense of humour and was able to enjoy the spectacle of the old and the new régimes coming awkwardly together. She watched the Jacobins pretending to

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be royalists and saw the down-at-heel noblemen making up to them ; heard the great ladies pleading with men they loathed and despised for the recall of their husbands or sons ; noted how the boors who had never been in a drawing-room were, in spite of themselves, impressed by the manners, the conversation, even the ideas of the relatives of those whom they had sent to the guillotine. But it was the moderate men who were most warmly welcomed : Cabanis, Lanjuinais, Boissy d'Anglas, Roederer, Daunou, and their like. Sieyès was a frequent visitor, and, with Chénier, helped to get the Convention to annul the decree of banishment against Talleyrand.

Though Madame de Staël preached the Republic, her intimates knew that what she really wanted was a Constitutional Monarchy on the English model. The result was that neither party trusted her. The Monarchists accused her of being a Republican, the Republicans said she was a Monarchist. Nor did she care, so long as the fuss and the noise continued. She was far too courageous to be discreet. The result was that when the Directory came to power she was exiled. Her husband got the sentence postponed, but she saw clearly that she had compromised herself. At the end of the year she went back to Coppet with Constant, and recollected her unruly emotions in comparative tranquillity. The result was a treatise on the Passions . . . " Perhaps, at the moment I am writing this, I wish to be loved once again. . . ." There was an interlude with Ribbing, a Swedish nobleman. Then, by the middle of '96, she had decided that the young Napoleon Bonaparte was her destined mate, and wrote to inform him of this. There was no reply.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Task of the Directory; The Conspiracy of Babeuf*

#### I

ON November 3rd, 1795, four men came out of the Tuileries, where two shabby fiacres, of the kind that anyone could hire in Paris, were waiting. As the four men took their seats there was a nod of command, and their mounted escort fell in and took position. Those who had gathered in the streets to see the Directors make their official entry into the Luxembourg may well have expected a more imposing procession. But the escort was suited to the modest hackney carriages, for the uniforms of the cavalymen were old, and many of the troopers had no riding boots. As the carriages crossed the river and jolted their way towards the Luxembourg the watchers had a chance to inspect their new Government. The fifth Director, Carnot, had not yet taken the place of Sièyes, who had refused the honour, and of the four only one was at all well-known. And he was the only one who attracted any attention—the Vicomte Paul François Nicolas de Barras. This depraved nobleman of Provence had a soldierly swagger about him, and an air of the old régime. He alone would not have looked out of place in a state-coach. His plumed hat and the great sword he held between his knees showed up his embarrassed colleagues, and gave a touch of comic opera to the whole affair. Barras, who had fought in India, was associated in the public mind with the march on the Hotel de Ville in Thermidor, and with the suppression of the insurrection of Vendémiaire, but he was even better known for his debauchery and his complete lack of political principles. Of Letourneur nobody has ever succeeded in saying much. He had no influence in affairs, and was contented to be almost unseen and unheard during his short tenure of office. To the public he was a nonentity. Reubell the Alsatian lawyer from Colmar was, at any rate, a man of fierce hatreds. Priests and émigrés were his quarry,

and Carnot says that his only complaint against Robespierre was that he was "too soft." He was a man with a prodigious capacity for hard work, and a violent, domineering manner. He loved jesting and disputes. His career had been consistent from the moment when he had been elected to the Constituent Assembly, and it was obvious that he and Barras and La Revellière-Lépeaux would work together in the Directory. La Revellière-Lépeaux, a hunchback with an enormous nose, small, pale eyes, and a pock-marked face, was a strangely contradictory character. He was a botanist, a good family man of simple tastes, driven into public life by the influence of Rousseau; and in public life a fanatic. At first a monarchist, he had soon begun to attack the King. But his courageous defence of the Girondins and his denunciation of Marat showed that he was a man of principle. After the fall of the Girondins he went into hiding for two years, and the Terror seemed to develop his hatred of tyranny in any form. But he did not recognize as tyranny his own campaign against the Church, which began as soon as he returned to public life. If Reubell was the Republic's guarantee against a return of the Monarchy, La Revellière was its guarantee of continued persecution of the Church.

As these men went through the wintry streets they saw closed shops and angry or apathetic faces. The shabbiness of their escort reminded them that there was no money in the Treasury to pay the armed forces and that bread was 50 francs a pound loaf. The carriage stopped outside the Luxembourg, and there was nobody to welcome the new Government. The concierge Dupont had not received notice of the installation, and the Directors wandered miserably along cold and damp passages and through unfurnished rooms. They were oppressed by the silence and dilapidation. After a while they decided to make the best of one of the rooms, and Dupont brought them from his own quarters four cheap chairs and a small table with an ill-fitting leg. They sat down, shivering and drawing their cloaks about them, but the concierge presently found a few logs and lit a fire for them. One of the Directors took the bellows and tried to produce a cheerful blaze in the hearth. Another drew from inside his cloak a piece of paper and writing materials. Then the rest

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gathered round him and watched him as he sat down at the wobbling table and wrote out slowly and painfully, for his fingers were numbed with the cold, the official record of the Act of Constitution of the Directory.

### II

Mallet du Pan, surveying the rulers of his country after the elections of '95, said with truth as well as wit : "*Le 21 janvier est là.*" The only hope for the regicides was, as usual, to remain in power, and it is easy to imagine one of them saying to the people, " You do not like us, but if we go, you will have a choice of two things : A King who is already crying from the housetops that he intends to bring back the old régime of privilege and oppression ; or the tyranny of the extreme Jacobins and another Terror." What they would not, of course, say was : " In either case we should lose our lives." It was a better policy to pose as the defenders of the people from the two perils which they dreaded. And it might have been easier to carry off the trick if the Convention or the Directory had provided bread and work. The danger came when the masses began to say that they couldn't be worse off under any other Government ; and it increased when the two new Councils turned out to be the old Convention under another name.

When the Directory came to power, the majority of the French people wanted, above all else, to see the Revolution completed and consolidated, but what they feared was that the old struggle of the factions would be taken up again, and that therefore their own lives would continue to be disturbed and insecure. That is why the trick by which the Convention guaranteed office in the new Councils for two-thirds of its members angered the more energetic and discouraged the less robust. This unwillingness of so many of the terrorists to submit themselves to the machinery of election meant that they made no pretence of being the representatives of the people. Nor were they any longer a coherent party with a policy. They were revealed as a collection of unscrupulous adventurers. They had tasted power and did not

intend to abandon it without a struggle, and they imagined, wrongly, that at any crisis they would once more be able to call up the Sections, to pay and arm the rabble which had made the famous revolutionary episodes—the attack on the Tuileries, the September massacres. The Jacobins had their clubs still, where the demagogues of the Cordeliers and the popular societies could meet and rant, but the response was not what it used to be; partly because so many people despaired of the future, and partly because the Army was now on the side of the Directory. The Panthéon Club, which met in the refectory of the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève, was the most active centre of extreme Jacobinism, and here Buonarotti and Babeuf plotted. But their movement, even had it not been betrayed, would only have served to prove that the starving masses no longer had their old energy or their old faith in insurrection. The poor workman or small tradesman, if he was not one of those who had made his name notorious, had nothing to fear from a restoration of the monarchy. He had had a quieter and more serene life before the Revolution. He had nothing now to lose. The peasant, on the other hand, had his freedom to lose, and the only form of Government he refused to consider was an absolute monarchy, the return of the old régime of privilege and oppression. He would not have objected to a Liberal Monarchy, or a properly constituted Republic. His ideas could be heard in the Salm Club, the Cercle Constitutionnel in the rue de Lille, where Republicans and the more moderate Royalists mingled, brought together by their antagonism to the out-and-out Royalists of the Clichy Club.

But if the mass of the people was growing less and less interested in politics, among the educated men and women there was intense activity. There were the Clichyens, in direct contact with the Comte de Provence at Verona, and with the various royalist agents all over Europe. There were the Orleanists, who took for their leader and their hope a man who had played his part in the Revolution and therefore seemed to offer them the security that a restored Bourbon would certainly not offer them. There were the intellectuals who had thronged the salon of Madame de Staël in the last days of the Convention, and they were the most interesting group of all.



## III

Since the bankruptcy of the Directory and the increasing misery of the people were due to the depreciation and final breakdown of the paper-money, it may be worth while to say a word about the *assignats*.

The desperate need for money which became the principal problem of the Directors the moment they were established in the Luxembourg was no new thing. They inherited that problem from their predecessors, but they inherited it in an aggravated form. This same spectre of bankruptcy, which had furnished Mirabeau with one of his most famous speeches, had haunted the men of '89. Somehow or other money had to be raised. Two loans had failed, further taxation was out of the question. The abolition of feudal dues relieved the peasants, but not the State. It was in the first months of the Revolution that a suggestion of Calonne began to be discussed seriously. There was one exceedingly rich corporation in France—the Catholic Church. The Church was considered by very many people to be slowly dying, and to be as much a part of a feudal organization of society that had outlived its usefulness, as was an absolute monarchy. Religious observance was decreasing, and the mood of those who were on fire with the new ideas was the mood of the worst type of intellectual and of the makers of utopias in every age: they believed that there could be no place for the Church in the new world they were to build. Why, it was argued, should a Government threatened with bankruptcy permit the continued existence of a rich body which served no purpose? Why not confiscate the lands of the religious houses and the great wealth of the Church? The clergy had already given up their tithes. Why not take this further step, at the same time issuing a certain number of *assignats* or promissory notes against the land so seized? Thus the financial question would be solved, and at the same time the Church would be crippled by a blow from which it could never recover. On October 10th, 1789, Talleyrand, the renegade bishop, made the proposal. Next day Mirabeau lent his powerful support to the project, well

understanding that the success of the idea depended on the restriction of the number of *assignats*, and boasting that he had no fear of inflation.

The clergy were not without able spokesmen such as Boisgelin, Maury, Sièyes. But the fact that Talleyrand and Grégoire could find priests to support them impressed those still in doubt. Nor was the debate concerned so much with the moral question as with the legal aspects of the claim. The supporters of Talleyrand's motion argued that the Church property belonged not to the clergy but to the whole corpus of the faithful. The clergy administered the property on behalf of the people, but as the people were sovereign and as the clergy no longer existed as a separate order, the clergy could no longer claim even to administer the property. Obviously the sovereign people, acting through its delegates, must now take over this property. The defenders of the Church replied that since the right to hold property was admitted by the revolutionary leaders, no exception could be made in the case of church property. Collective property should enjoy the same immunity as private property. Further, it was not true to say that church property belonged to the faithful. It belonged, as could easily be proved, to various communities and churches. A gift made by a devout man or woman was not made to the faithful, but to a certain monastery or convent. The seizure of Church lands would enrich not the Treasury, but speculators and their agents, and would make the Government responsible for the machinery of education and charitable works, of which it had no experience.

On December 2nd Talleyrand's motion was carried by 568 votes against 346. Church property was declared to be at the disposal of the Nation. The clergy took this to mean that they were not to be robbed, for the present, of all their possessions. The State might content itself with a raid here and there. In December 400,000,000 *assignats* were issued, each worth 1,000 francs and bearing interest at 5 per cent., and in April of 1790, the Church property was nationalized—that is, taken by force. To meet the general lack of confidence and the disinclination of so many people to purchase property stolen from the Church, a second issue of *assignats* was made, without interest, but this

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time the *assignat* was to be accepted by anybody as legal tender, in place of real money. Other issues followed. At the expense of inflation and destitution, a new class was created with very strong reasons for supporting the Revolution. But the Church had been alienated, and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy completed the work.

As the number of *assignats* in circulation increased, and their value correspondingly decreased, inflation forced the Convention, in 1793, to pass a law of Maximum. The result was the usual black market transactions, by which people with money made an arrangement with dishonest tradesmen at the expense of the poor. The abolition of the Maximum at the end of 1794 made matters worse, because the financial situation was already completely out of hand. The Convention announced in confident tones that, when once the peasants were permitted to sell their produce in the open market and goods began to circulate freely, all would be well. But what happened was that prices rocketed and the speculators increased the great fortunes they had been making for years past. The paper money, which had continued to depreciate during the period of the Maximum, now became almost worthless. Anticipating the calling-in of the *assignats*, the profiteers began to hoard them, in the hope of getting what was left of the nationalized property. In the meantime, there were further issues of notes. As prices rose, famine increased. The peasants, uncertain of the future, and knowing that the paper money was worthless, withheld their produce, with the result that the urban workers had now to face not only impossible prices but also a scarcity of the necessities of life. In Paris, queues formed outside the food-shops as soon as daylight broke, and those who were lucky enough to get a piece of bread returned home through the streets eating their share of it and keeping the rest for their children. In the workmen's districts, like the Faubourg St. Marceau, where such misery in other days had led to insurrection, there was a silence of despair. The families with no work lived on a few potatoes, and bread when they could find it. On the Pont-au-Change, every evening, there were tables on the footways spread with food for those who had not eaten all day and could pay the few pence necessary. There were herrings,

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with bits of chopped onion and vinegar, prunes, lentils, and "salads" consisting of leaves and unnamed herbs. Here the poor came and gulped herrings, backbone and all, and whatever else they could pay for. The poorest of the poor routed among the remains. On the quays, under the windows of the Louvre, there were broken-down taverns where the workers could come for a cheap meal, and all over Paris it was such places that saved many from starvation. In the countryside the plight of the poorest labourers was even worse. In Paris the Convention, if only through fear of riots, had to make some attempt to feed the starving. But in the country they had to beg from farmers, or to get what they could by holding up the convoys on their way to Paris. Bread became scarcer. There was no fuel either for warmth or for cooking.

### IV

There was no reason why anybody should expect an improvement in the internal situation of France, at the end of 1795. The desire of the country to be rid of the Jacobins had been thwarted, and any hope they may have had in the five Directors was very quickly destroyed. Only one of them was respected—Carnot (who had taken the place of the cautious and timorous Sieyès). Carnot was known as a firm and sincere Republican, interested principally in military affairs; the man who, with Danton and Saint-Just, had contributed so much to the salvation of the country in the hours of its greatest peril. Soldiers had spread the tale of how he stood among them after the last decisive charge at Wattingies, with his hat on his sword-point. From the ill-assorted five, living in disagreement in the Luxembourg or strutting in their romantic theatrical costumes for important appearances in Paris, there was clearly nothing to be hoped but confused efforts to maintain a balance between the two extreme parties. In fact, they reflected the body which had elected them. They were, as much as their fellow-regicides, compromised men and were playing for their lives. Carnot occupied himself chiefly with his maps, with one eye always on the wilder Jacobins. Reubell watched the moderates and the royalists. La Revellière

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directed the persecution of the Catholics, in which the others joined him, since they saw the Catholic revival as a step towards the restoration of the Monarchy. He also attempted to popularize his own favourite religion, which he called Theophilanthropy.<sup>1</sup>

The state of France, when this new Government came into power, was even more deplorable than it had been a few months before. Everything in the internal situation had grown worse. The people in the towns were hungrier, prices had gone up, the country was closer to bankruptcy, the administrative machinery was moving more haltingly, the rich were living even more vicious lives, and the mass of the people were deeper in despair. The Directors, the Ancients, and the Five Hundred were soon all equally unpopular, and the chaos produced by their failure to govern at all made even a strong tyranny seem desirable. The Revolution had swept away privilege, but here before their eyes and already was a new kind of privilege. Many, watching the profiteers and their women, their hired politicians and their tame bureaucrats, wondered if it had been worth while to exchange the old nobility for such masters. In Paris particularly the contrast between poor and rich was growing intolerable. Divorce had become fashionable, and Barras was soon to take the Cabarrus from Tallien and enthrone her in the Luxembourg, with her train of Merveilleuses as maids-of-honour. Dancing and gambling and luxurious meals passed the time. Family life, in the full sense of the words, was finished. Pornographic books could be bought and read by anybody. A kind of pagan madness drove those with money to live in a rage of pleasure, as though they knew that France was breaking up on all sides. The old anger of the mobs, which would once have swept aside all this filth and futility, had cooled down to apathy after Thermidor. That apathy now increased, when people realized that the change of Government had meant nothing and that they were still saddled with the same worthless adventurers.

A picture of the discontent in the streets of the capital, after the Directory had come into power, can be reconstructed from the police reports of the day. Bread and peace were the desire of the

<sup>1</sup> See Aulard: *Histoire Politique de la Révolution Française*, Book 3, Chapter III. Also, the *Memoirs of La Revellière-Lépeaux*, Vol. II, Ch. XXXII.

people, and many were even looking back to the days before Thermidor, and regretting them. The extreme Jacobins and the Royalists were, of course, both using the general discontent for their own purposes, and everywhere, in cafés, at meetings, at street-corners, the Republic was cursed. "We were happier when we had a King," was frequently heard on all sides, and rumours that the Dauphin was alive and at liberty were listened to eagerly. There was a story among others, that a man on guard at the Temple on the day the boy was supposed to have died saw workmen carrying out baths. One workman stumbled, and the cry of a child came from the bath he was holding. The presence of well-known Royalists, not seen for some time in the capital, is noted. But the police agents give the impression that in spite of the apparent agitation and unrest of the masses, Paris was reasonably calm, not because the people were contented, but because they felt their own impotence, and the numbness of despair was settling over them. The real danger seemed to them to be likely to come from the Royalists, who had arms and who expressed their loathing of the Government loudly and continually. The misery of the people made it easier for the Royalists to make recruits, and the police noted that in the suburbs there were demands for a King. Royalist agents now had no fear of going to those quarters which had the strongest revolutionary tradition. Meanwhile, both the Royalists and the Jacobins continued to paste up their posters and to distribute their pamphlets. You might find a fleur-de-lys chalked on a wall, or a call to assassinate the Directors scratched on a paving-stone. But the characteristic of all the daily reports is their monotony. It is always the same story of universal disgust with the men who were supposed to be governing the country. Over and over again recurs the phrase *agitation des esprits*. Over and over again comes the same account of angry scenes outside the bakers' shops, of threats in the cafés, of rumours of a return of the Terror. The name of Babeuf recurs in conversations. The general note is one of hopelessness.

The five Directors appointed six Ministers, and at once discovered that there was no money to run the Ministries. Since ordinary methods of taxation had become impossible, they advised a kind of capital levy. It was a failure. So was a new issue of

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paper money. Commerce came to a standstill. Unemployment increased. But there was still one way of retrieving the fortunes of the nation. There was always the war of conquest. There was always the prospect of booty from a victorious campaign. No wonder the Government began to consider this last chance. But the financial problem was only one of many. There was the demand, all over France, for the Mass, for the non-juring priests. And there was Babeuf.

### V

There was a man watching all this disintegration, the embittered son of a poor Picard workman. His high hopes had been cheated, his life was a failure. He had known starvation and imprisonment, and had shared the sorrows and miseries of the people. He was an impossible visionary, and a firebrand, with a simple mind, and a tenacious attachment to his master plan, which was complete equality for all through the abolition of private property. This man, whom Jaurès called the creator of modern Communism, was François-Noël Babeuf, later Camille Babeuf, and, after Thermidor, Gracchus Babeuf. He was self-educated, and the political and social ideas which he got from his reading of Rousseau and Mably, Morelly and Halvétius, were developed by what he saw of the lives of the peasants and industrial workers of Picardy, and later in a small administrative post in connexion with the surveying and registration of the lands of the nobility. He married young a chambermaid in the service of his first employer, but the reputation he acquired as an agitator doomed him to disappointment after disappointment, and often to periods of destitution. It was not until September, 1792, that he succeeded in getting a position as a minor government official, which gave him a chance to feed and clothe his wife and children and give them a home. There was opposition to his appointment, as he was now known as a trouble-maker beyond the borders of Picardy, and it was not long before his intransigence became a nuisance to less honest colleagues, and he was transferred from Amiens to Montdidier. Here again he quickly made enemies. He himself has told how he presided over the burning of the tapestries of the Town Hall, because they had the fleur-de-lys on them, and of a collection of

portraits of Kings. The pretext for his dismissal was a signature he had affixed too carelessly to an official document. He was accused of forgery, and because of his reputation, an enemy of long standing was able to get him arrested. He escaped to Paris with his family, and once more found himself penniless, and, by now, a marked man. His misfortunes began to inflame his sense of social injustice. In Paris he wrote letters to Roland and to Danton, who had only to make a few enquiries to be warned against him. For a while he worked as a clerk to the adventurer Fournier, until Sylvain Maréchal, who was on the staff of the *Révolutions de Paris* procured him a secretaryship on a food commission. And the moment he had his first pay and saw his family temporarily secure, he started his tricks again. To Chaumette he outlined a plan for an insurrection, to be led by the Commune, against the Convention, in order to defend the rights of the poor against the speculators and usurers. Chaumette made no reply. The old question of the forgery was brought up again by the officials in Montdidier, and he was arrested and involved in a series of legal proceedings. He was finally set at liberty, and returned to his work in Paris, not because he liked it, but because, as he said, he and his family had to have something to eat. Here he remained until Thermidor convinced him that now, at last, his great chance had come to preach his doctrine of equality—not the theoretical equality which was all the Revolution had brought, but real equality; complete liberty of the press, universal suffrage, land held in common. He got in touch with Guffroy, a follower of Marat, and made such a favourable impression on him that Guffroy offered to finance a paper which Babeuf would edit under the title *Tribun du Peuple*. In this paper, published irregularly, he had an opportunity to develop the ideas which he had worked out during his hand-to-mouth existence. But the method he used was so violent that Guffroy refused to have any hand in the paper and stopped publication. By now Babeuf was hardened to setbacks, and he did not lose heart easily. Albertine, sister of the dead Marat, and Simone Evrard, his mistress, listened to Babeuf's story and tried to help him. Finally the *Club Electoral* financed him, but, fearing police intervention, almost at once ceased their meetings and withdrew their subsidy.



Fouché next comes into the story. Babeuf met him at a moment when the terrorists were beginning to be hounded for their crimes, and it was useful for Fouché to have a literary hack at his command. With the work he did for Fouché he earned money to continue the *Tribun du Peuple*. He at once began to attack the enemies of Fouché, particularly Tallien and Fréron. There was a scene in the Convention, in which Fouché acknowledged his relations with Babeuf. He would have done better to keep quiet, for on the next day the police arrested Gracchus for forgery. While he was in prison at Arras he confided his wife and family to the care of Fouché, and the future Duke of Otranto gave little Emile Babeuf ten francs.

The months of imprisonment at Arras were a period of the greatest importance for Babeuf. It was in his cell there that he began to work out his great design for the perfect Republic. In Arras he met one of the principal directors of his *Conjuration des Egaux*, Charles Germain. When the two of them were transferred to Paris to be released, they met the young Italian nobleman Buonarotti, who was a great admirer of Babeuf's writings, and was to be the chronicler of the conspiracy. The paper was re-started, and there was a quarrel with Fouché, who, for the moment, supported the Government. People were now buying the *Tribun du Peuple*, and Babeuf felt himself more independent. Clearly and with emphasis he began to preach his wild doctrine of complete equality. Nobody is entitled to anything more than the barest necessities of life, because superior talent is not a fact but an illusion. Anybody who has more than the barest necessities is guilty of theft, and therefore his surplus must be taken away from him. Anybody who can do more or better work than his neighbour is in a conspiracy to destroy his equality. Equal education for all will reduce to an equality of capacity and talent. The essential aim of social institutions should be to eradicate any hope of ever becoming richer, more powerful, or more intelligent than your neighbour. Private property must be abolished. And so on. This system would eliminate "boundary marks, hedges, walls, bolts on doors, disputes, actions at law, theft, assassination, and all crimes; tribunals, prisons, gibbets, punishments, despair, envy, jealousy, insatiability, pride, deceit, duplicity—in fact, every

vice." The last sentence sounds like a forefather of one of our modern Plans for a Servile State. And whatever one may think of Modern Communism, as the creator of which Jaurès hails the author of this nonsense, it may be as damnably inhuman, but it is less fantastic.

The Directory had not been long in power before their attention was called to the *Tribun du Peuple*, and soon Babeuf was on the run from the police, with plenty of people ready and willing to conceal him while he carried on his work. The police, unable to seize him, imprisoned his wife, and closed the Société du Panthéon, the headquarters of all the elements of discontent, and a well-known meeting place for the followers of Babeuf. But the *Tribun du Peuple* was making recruits, as any movement which promised to end the present misery of the poor was bound to do. Secret agents were watching the Café Chrétien and the Bains Chinois and a dozen other haunts of the agitators. In all these places the name of Babeuf began to be spoken more and more, and his chief followers, who had now substituted the word 'democrats' for the word 'patriots' were trying to weld into some kind of unity the various cliques of the discontented. In March the young cavalry officer Germain bluntly suggested to Babeuf that he was the man best fitted to lead the democrats and to be the spokesman for all their complaints. Germain and his associates were by now determined that there must be an insurrection, since there was no other means of changing the Government, and it was not long before the first serious step was taken. A Secret Directory of Public Safety was formed, which, on its own admission, was an insurrectionary Committee. The four secret Directors were Babeuf, the journalist Maréchal, and two aristocrats of the old régime: Count Félix de Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau, brother of the deputy assassinated in 1793, and a rich Marquis named Antonelle. Of these noblemen, the first had made a reputation as a very violent speaker at the Société du Panthéon, and the second had dabbled in journalism, and had written a pamphlet full of the exaggerated ideas about equality which obsessed Babeuf. These four men, and the Secretary Pillé, were to work in a kind of isolation, communicating with their agents through a workman named Didier. The agents, of whom there were twelve, were to keep in touch

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with public opinion, make recruits and organize meetings. They would send in their reports, together with information about arms depôts, stocks of food, and so forth. The Directors would base their propaganda and their insurrectionary literature on the information they received.

In the earlier years of the Revolution such movements as this were made by the mobs, who had their own orators and their own leaders. But it was the Army now which was the stronghold of Jacobin fervour, and Babeuf formed a second Committee, with its own agents, to win over the troops of the garrison to his ideas. This Committee numbered five, and consisted of the young officer Germain, already nominated as War Minister in the Government of the République des Egaux; General Rossignol, cashiered and poverty-stricken; General Fyon, of no particular character or opinions; Massar, also a soldier, full of destructive ambition; and Captain Grisel, who was to play the most important part in the conspiracy.

Babeuf, who was still wanted by the police, never went out in the daylight, but it was impossible for his organization to escape the notice of the authorities, especially as they made no secret of their aims. Pamphlets and posters, setting forth their ideas, began to appear all over Paris. Secret police reports of the 23rd and 24th Germinal speak of crowds in the Faubourg St. Antoine collecting round large posters, which announced an "Analysis of the Doctrine of Babeuf" and of professional agitators, obviously paid, collecting groups of people and addressing them. There is mention of a new song at the Bains Chinois, "Mourant de faim, mourant de froid," and of a man who said: "As long as we and our families can live, what do we care about this or that form of Government?" The Government at once passed a law against street meetings, and all provocations to anarchy or royalism. This gave Babeuf the chance to cry that tyranny was in its death-agony, since it was terrorizing the people. There were clashes with the police, and Babeuf's posters were torn down. There were enraged groups in the cafés and, as fast as the posters disappeared, others took their place, demanding the Constitution of '93. The police were unable to stop the assemblies in the streets. Meanwhile the Secret Directors were discussing immediate action,

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and Babeuf had already composed an appeal to the people to rise and attack the Directory and the two Chambers. But there were divisions of opinion. Grisel was outspokenly critical of the hare-brained scheme. And there was a debate on what was to be done about a rival conspiracy, in which were involved a number of notorious survivors of the Convention—Amar, Vadier, Barère, Voulland. Warrants were out for their arrest, and they had suddenly become most anxious to join Babeuf's band. After much argument it was decided that the two conspiracies should join forces and help each other in every possible way, since their common aim was to overthrow the Government. Babeuf's Committee would then assume power, with an Assembly composed of the ex-deputies and the colleagues of Babeuf.

On May 8th, 1796, there was a meeting in the house of Drouet, the famous postmaster of Ste. Menehould, whose amazing cross-country ride by night headed off the fugitive royal family at Varennes. Drouet was to have delivered a speech (written for him by Babeuf) in the Five Hundred, in order to start a brawl, but he refused to do it. At this meeting of May 8th, the main business was to fix the date for the insurrection. No decision was arrived at, and the meeting was to continue on the next day. When the gathering had broken up and all had gone home, Drouet heard a clatter in the street outside. A few moments later he was confronted by the Minister of Police, Cochon, who had arrived with a strong detachment.

Grisel had nursed the conspiracy long enough. He had watched it grow, and might have betrayed it a little earlier had not the merging of Babeuf's committee with the leaders of the rival conspiracy promised an even larger haul than he had hoped for, and therefore a bigger reward. He saw that the thing had no chance of success, but encouraged his colleagues to proceed with it. His criticism at the beginning of May was probably a stratagem to find out in greater detail what was intended when once the blow had been struck, and to ascertain what chance there was of Amar and Vadier and the rest of them being welcomed by Babeuf. At all events, on May 4th, Carnot, who was then President of the Directory, had received a letter, informing him of Babeuf's plot and giving a few names. At a subsequent interview with Carnot,

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more names were given, 245 of them, and Cochon was set to work. A first swoop on a house in the rue St. Florentin failed. There was nobody there. The second swoop, arriving too late, found only Drouet. By May 10th Grisel had sent in details of another meeting, and had discovered the place where Babeuf hid himself. A number of the leaders were arrested, but Babeuf was not among them. Carnot, however, had sent Cochon a precise description of Babeuf's lair in the rue de la Grande-Truanderie. And there they ran him to earth, with his secretary Pillé and Buonarotti. By a cruel irony, as the prisoners were driven away, the crowds which had gathered at the sight of the police shouted: "Well done! Don't let the thieves and assassins escape!" From the description of the official who made the arrest, Dossonville, it is clear that the rumour had been carefully spread that some thieves and assassins were to be arrested. But Babeuf, who had dedicated his days and nights to the poor and the humble, deserved a happier end to his public life. He tried to kill himself when the death sentence was pronounced, and on May 17th, 1797, he was carried, weak from his wound, to the guillotine, and died with great fortitude.

Whatever Marxists may say, the conspiracy of Babeuf did not owe its limited appeal to any doctrinal content. Those whom it attracted saw a chance of plunder or power. The oppressed and the hungry were too dispirited to pay much attention to the propaganda of the agents. Most people were not interested in one form of government or another. They were interested only in getting rid of the present Government. That being so, and that being Babeuf's aim, it is surprising that so few were ready to follow him. Again and again, in police reports and memoirs, we find the same loathing of what the Revolution had done, and the same wistful remark: "it was better as it used to be." Granier de Cassagnac quotes reports of Babeuf's agents which tell the same story. According to Buonarotti, the contemporary historian of the conspiracy, the secret committee counted on no more than 17,000 men, composed of survivors of the old insurrections, veterans of the Bastille, the march on Versailles, the two invasions of the Tuileries; paid killers of the September massacres; these and a number of cashiered officers and other odds and ends with

## THE TASK OF THE DIRECTORY; CONSPIRACY OF BABEUF

nothing much to lose, and a good deal to gain. Babeuf's only hope of success was to inflame, in large numbers, the destitute, the homeless, the outcasts. For he could scarcely hope to enlist more than a few eccentrics from the classes which he proposed to abolish. What most of his followers wanted was money for food and drink, and when funds ran short, they lost their interest in the conspiracy. It is not to be supposed that such men were interested in any serious discussion of what French writers call *babouvisme*. However strong may have been Babeuf's passion for what he imagined was social justice, in whatever jargon he and his committee dressed up their hatred of the rich and of property, he had too much sense to attempt any but the crudest incitements when it came to recruiting his motley army.

An announcement made to starving men and misgoverned men, that the goods, the money, and the land of their country are to be shared out equally, is bound to have an appeal; especially when those men are further infuriated by a parade of luxury in the city where they are suffering so bitterly. And future champions of the people will always tend to emphasize the nobility of the idea, without enquiring too much into its practicability, or into the methods to be used. Babeuf's aim was to seize power by force and to keep it by force. His "*Acte Insurrectionnel*" makes that quite clear. Article II, providing for the dissolution of the Directory and the two Councils, adds that the members will be tried by the people. It is enough to recall that the victims of the September massacres were tried by the people. The very phrase is a promise to the mob that it will be allowed to murder without hindrance. That, and wholesale pillage were to be the methods by which the programme would be carried out. The fact that so few were attracted to the conspiracy shows that it was recognized as a ludicrous attempt. With so much in its favour at the moment, it came to nothing. In the faubourgs, voices sang Sylvain Maréchal's specially written song about the Army and the people being the same happy family which had conquered the Bastille. But the song was out of date. Soldiers and people were now on opposite sides of the barricade.

## VI

The really tenacious and steadily increasing opposition to the Government came from the Catholics, until a point was reached when, as in the earlier days of the Revolution, persecution of religion became a political principle. It seemed to be the surest weapon against a counter-revolution, and more particularly against a counter-revolution in favour of the Monarchy. The Directors were too short-sighted and too ignorant of history to perceive that their attempts at repression could have only a momentary success. They should have known that the mass of the people were too firmly attached to their religion to give it up. Hoche, who had had experience of what was happening in the Western departments, had warned the Directors that their policy was opening the way for a counter-revolution. But he who felt most strongly in such matters was the old Girondin La Revellière, and for the sake of peace at their meetings the other four gave him his head. The decree forbidding the ringing of the Church bells warned the Catholics of what would follow, with the result that they were ready to join any kind of reactionary movement.

Hoche understood thoroughly the problem of the Catholic West. The brilliant young soldier showed himself a far abler politician than those who were never able to understand the tenacity of the Catholics. He saw no reason why Catholics should not enjoy the benefits of the Revolution as much as deists or atheists. But he knew that the way to reconcile them to sudden changes was to present the Revolution as bringing happiness and justice to all men, and not as a new tyranny. He knew that the Bretons loved their country as deeply as the men of any district of France, and he himself had so profound an attachment to the Republic that he was jealous for its good name, and wished it to appear to all what it was to him, an ordered system of government under which the innocent should not suffer for their convictions. He told the Directors repeatedly that so long as religious toleration was refused, there would be no peace in that part of France. He thought—and he was wrong—that without persecution, religion would die out. But he was right in saying that it was absurd to

expect simple countrymen to accept on the spur of the moment the new philosophy ; and that killing men is no way to enlighten them. At first the Directors accused him of conspiring against the Republic, and his humanity and his exalted views led the royalists to hope that they might use him for their schemes. But, finally, the Directors had to acknowledge the wisdom of his policy.

So far the new Government had done everything possible to increase its unpopularity. It had dragged the country into a worse financial position than ever ; it had refused to examine the very real grievances of those who were ready to join any insurrection rather than die of hunger ; it had exasperated the Catholics, and driven them half-way towards the plotting émigrés. There remained, as I have said, the war.

Four days before Vendémiaire the Convention had solemnly approved the annexation of Belgium, and the principle of the natural frontiers. The annexation of Belgium meant war to the death. As Bainville has said, it was not the killing of Louis XVI that roused England, but the capture of Antwerp. So long as France claimed Belgium, England would be ready to finance coalition after coalition, alliance after alliance. The Directory, in 1796, had every reason for wishing to continue the war. It would fill the Treasury, and employ Generals who were becoming too popular, and give the discontented something to take their minds off the state of the country, to divert them from social problems. The last point had been made by the Girondins in 1792, against the persistent opposition of Robespierre. But Robespierre did not understand that France had only been saved by her soldiers, and had he lived he would have learned that something more than peace was necessary to establish his reign of justice. Nor did he realize the determination of Europe to destroy the Revolution. Where he was right, like a few others at the time, was in foreseeing a military dictatorship as a result of a successful war. What he could not foresee was that this would be the best thing that could happen to the France of 1799.



## CHAPTER V

### *Joséphine de Beauharnais ; Bonaparte and the Directory*

#### I

THE Directory inherited the foreign policy of the Committee of Public Safety. There is something startling in the spectacle of this corrupt and despised body speaking so loudly and so boldly the mind of Danton, and refusing to hear any mention of the word peace until the natural boundaries of France have been securely established : the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees. But beneath this proud posture was an ignoble fear. The real intention of the Directors was to keep the troops occupied. Peace would mean their return to their homes, and since they were already ill-paid, ill-fed, and badly-clothed, and would soon discover that there was no work for them, they would be a new danger to the Government. The continuation of the war was not only an effective means of holding at arm's length hundreds of thousands of discontented men, but news of successes might even bring a little well-needed popularity to the Directors. Against these reasons for continuing the war there was a fear of another kind, persisting from the earliest days of the Republic, the fear which Robespierre had put into words in his contest with the Girondins, and which had increased with every victory ; the fear of the successful and popular soldier. The Convention had this in mind when it sent out its Commissioners, with their full powers. Their main task was to inflame the armies, to make every soldier a soldier of the Revolution. But their secondary task was to keep an eye, and a strong hand, on the Generals. "One day," said Saint-Just, "we shall see some man of ambition step from their ranks. He will kill liberty."

Whatever profit the Directory might see in a prolonged war, the country wanted peace. It was decided, therefore, that the popularity to be gained from a rapid series of victories, followed by peace, would outweigh the risks to be run from the returning armies. Jourdan and Pichegru were ordered to cross the Rhine and drive the Austrians to the Danube, thus forcing the Emperor of Austria to make peace. But the campaign was a miserable failure, owing to the treachery of Pichegru.

## JOSEPHINE DE BEAUHARNAIS

For 1796 Carnot had more ambitious plans. Jourdan and Moreau were to carry out the scheme of '95 but, to make success certain, Austria was to be attacked at the same time in Italy. Carnot's colleagues were entranced with the Italian part of the plan. It meant enormous plunder, and millions in tribute, and, to La Revellière, it meant the invasion of Rome and a mortal blow at the Catholic religion. The question was to find the right General for the work. Carnot remembered that the young Bonaparte had once sent to the Committee of Public Safety a plan of operations for such an invasion of Lombardy and the Po valley as was now being discussed at the Directory. Moreover this General was on the spot, commanding the garrison troops of Paris. And he had shown his loyalty to the Government in the crisis of Vendémiaire. He was known as a Jacobin, had compromised himself in the eyes of all the reactionary groups, and was said to be indifferent to wealth and power. It seemed to the Directors perfectly safe to entrust such an ambitious operation to one who was indebted to Barras for his first command, and who had no following anywhere, since he appeared to hold no political opinions. The honest little artillery officer was interviewed several times at the Luxembourg. His mind was obsessed with his calling. He made suggestions, discussed the strategy and the tactics of the coming campaign, and always with the deference of a disciplined soldier in the presence of great statesmen. They were charmed with him. How different he seemed from the ambitious, temperamental, insolent Generals with whom they were accustomed to deal. How he must have smiled to himself, the honest little artillery officer, when he left the Luxembourg!

One day Carnot showed Bonaparte some instructions drafted by General Clarke, which were to be sent to Schérer, who commanded in Italy, and asked his opinion of them. Bonaparte replied by drafting some suggestions of his own. They were sent instead of Clarke's, but Schérer found them impracticable. "Whoever thought of this idea," he said, "let him come and put it into execution himself." Bonaparte was summoned and, at the request of the Directors, explained and developed his suggestions. Carnot, watching his face, and able, as a soldier, to appreciate the value of his conclusions, remembered that this

young officer had studied the Italian question in every detail over a considerable period of time and had already fought in Italy. He proposed that Bonaparte should be appointed to succeed Schérer, in order to carry out his plan. The other Directors agreed, and on March 2nd, 1796, a decree of the Directory gave him the command of the Army of Italy.

To appreciate the effect of this news when it was published we have only to recall what Bonaparte was at this moment in the eyes of his contemporaries. For the Royalists and for the moderate men of every shade, he was an unprepossessing Corsican adventurer who had succeeded in ingratiating himself with the Government, and particularly with its most despised member, Barras, by firing on the Sections; a Jacobin, if not actually a terrorist. Some remembered that he had been imprisoned after Toulon, and thought he was lucky to have escaped with his life. To the Jacobins he was a man who had put down an insurrection, and to entrust an Army to him, when there were so many distinguished Generals to choose from, appeared ludicrous. To all, his extreme youth and his short experience of active service were alone argument enough against the appointment. To the discerning few he was a talented gunner, determined to make a career for himself. In certain circles he was being talked about, but to advance him in this sudden fashion seemed to be an insult to the Army. But the Directors, and those in touch with them, had listened to him and observed him, and they were convinced that his ambition would make him their docile servant, and that he had the military capacity required for the task in Italy.

Barras was particularly pleased with the choice made by Carnot, since he regarded the young General almost as a protégé or a favourite nephew, in whose career he proposed to take a close interest. For Barras needed friends in every camp, and it was very gratifying to him to be able to lay his hand on a soldier who was indebted to him, and who seemed to lack the political ambition which made some other soldiers so dangerous to handle. And now Barras had another stroke of luck, which seemed to be certain to bind Bonaparte still more closely to him, and which helps us to understand his confidence, later on, that he would have a profitable part to play in the outcome of Brumaire.

In the course of his work as commander of the garrison, Bonaparte had to see that the decree of the Committee of Public Safety, ordering all citizens to give up their arms, was carried out. The widow of Alexandre de Beauharnais, a nobleman guillotined in '94, made ready to give up her dead husband's sword. But her fifteen-year-old son, Eugène, went to Bonaparte and asked to be allowed to keep the sword. Bonaparte, impressed with the spirit of the boy, granted the request. His mother, pleased with this courtesy, sent a message to say that she would like to call on the General at his headquarters in the rue des Capucines, to thank him personally for his graciousness. As she came into the room where he awaited her, she is not likely to have remembered the tale she was so fond of repeating, how a gipsy had told her, when she was a little girl, that she would one day be Queen of France.

Joséphine de Beauharnais was no longer young, but she was one of those attractive women of the world who have mastered every trick of their trade. Her beauty was of that helpless, languorous kind which so powerfully affects men of great energy, and she had among all her other arts, that of making the man to whom she talked believe that he was especially pleasing to her. Her movements were slow and graceful, her gestures elegant. She was nearly always smiling, but with lips closed, for her teeth were appallingly bad, and the malicious Madame d'Abrantès has not hesitated to assert that she suffered from that misfortune which the tooth-paste merchants call a social crime. But, contrary to what the startling advertisements tell us to-day, it never kept men away from her. Expensive clothes, frivolous conversation, and continual excitement were necessary to her. She was good-natured, amoral, and intelligent enough not to discuss matters of which she was ignorant. Barras was her lover at the moment, but she realized that the time had come for her to have a settled establishment, and to provide for her future. She was already on the look-out.

Bonaparte fell head-over-heels in love with her. And there was something not only flattering to the middle-aged woman, but amusing to the *femme à la mode* in the violent passion of an

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unsophisticated young man. In her world love was a game, but here was a ferocious wooer who talked of marriage. To the Creole in search of amusement he was a new experience. He dressed anyhow, had none of the fatuous small talk to which she was accustomed, and was awkward in his bearing. That awkwardness and the unfamiliarity of the atmosphere in which he found himself, may have made him at first doubtful whether she would take him seriously. But she knew, less than a month after Vendémiaire, that he was infatuated, and she had already made up her mind to keep him at hand. "You do not come any more to see a friend who loves you," she writes to him. "You have completely deserted her. You are wrong, for she is very fond of you. Come to lunch with me to-morrow. I must see you and talk to you about your affairs. Good night, my friend. I embrace you. Widow Beauharnais." The effect of such a letter on the impetuous young lover may be imagined. Like every woman of her kind, she soon became a little alarmed at the sincere fervour of her remarkable suitor. She herself was quite unmoved by his protestations, but he interested her, and he was a man with a future. She never cared for him, any more than she cared for the rest of the men in her life, for there was no profundity in her nature. And in one of her letters she revealed her feelings with engaging frankness. "You saw General Bonaparte at my house. Well, he's the man who wants to father Alexandre's orphans, and to marry his widow! You will ask me if I love him. No, I don't. Do I dislike him, then? No. I'm lukewarm."

His ardour increased in proportion to her coquettishness, and she obviously began to concern herself with his career. She was not the woman to marry for love—even if love had been in question on her side—or for any other reason but to make sure of a position in society, and plenty of money to keep up that position. And at her right hand was Barras to encourage her, Barras who boasted that he could do great things for her future husband. All the time that he could spare from his duties as Commander of the garrison, and from his study of the Italian situation, Bonaparte spent with Josephine, who, until the first month of '96, was living with her aunt, Fanny de Beauharnais, in the rue de

Poitiers. Here, and subsequently in Julie Talma's house in the rue Chantereine, which Josephine rented, he could be alone with her. But she was a woman who loved the noise and stir of the social life of that time, and very soon Bonaparte found himself admitted to the circle of her friends. He was expected to attend receptions, to go to the opera, and to the ball. He became a frequent visitor at Mme. Tallien's house in the Chaussée d'Antin, and at her imitation cottage in the Cours la Reine. For the first time he found himself in luxurious salons where the old régime and the new became acquainted. He could see Tallien or some even baser ruffian talking to Mme. d'Aiguillon or Mme. de Lameth at the Hôtel Longueville, and among the affectations of the Incroyables and the Merveilleuses he could catch the accent of the old world. He became a regular visitor to Mme. Tallien, who was an intimate friend of Josephine, and he attended the receptions at the Luxembourg. Hortense de Beauharnais has left a note on a dinner given there by Barras, at which her mother and Mme. Tallien were present. Hortense was placed next to a General, who leaned across her with such persistency to talk to Josephine, that she had to sit far back in her seat. She studied this man's face, which she found handsome, expressive, but remarkably pallid. "He spoke with passion, and seemed to be completely obsessed by my mother. It was General Bonaparte." At the thought that her mother might marry again, she became much disturbed. The next time she saw the General, she disliked him even more, because he teased her. His visits to her mother became more frequent, and she found that he was very popular among their friends. Then, after a time, she began to enjoy his conversation, particularly his unusual way of telling ghost stories. And it was no surprise to her when one day Mme. Campan brought her the news that her mother was to be married to the General. Some time in January, '96, he had proposed to Josephine and had been accepted.

Barras, comparing Mme. Tallien with Josephine, said that there was always an element of calculation in the love-affairs of the latter: *son libertinage n'était que de tête*. She must have realized that Barras was tired of her, and ready to desert her. Odd though the idea had seemed to her at first, there might well

be advantages for a woman no longer young in marrying a man who had no time for the fashionable promiscuities, and, in any case, was not of the temperament to adapt himself to the farmyard morals of so many of her associates. Moreover, everybody in her circle had remarked something unusual in the young General; a force of character which looked like making him successful. She had the good sense to know that a woman of her way of living must one day make the decision to come out of the hurly-burly and settle down to a conventional life, before it is too late. She listened to his rhapsodies, read his tempestuous letters, allowed him to see that he pleased her, and finally, after asking the advice of Barras, consented to marry him.

The moment it was known that the marriage had been arranged, the hostility of both families hardened. Eugène and Hortense found themselves supported by the Bonaparte family in their opposition. Mme. Mère, not having been informed by her son of his intentions, at once decided that his deception proved that he knew the marriage would not be acceptable to her. It was from his brothers that she heard of the engagement. To her Josephine was a woman of loose morals, whose reputation for casual love-affairs was well known. She had no sympathy with the extravagant, disorderly life led by such women, to whom the word family meant nothing. Moreover, Josephine had no money and was probably too old to bear children. The rest of the family were infuriated, partly because they had a very strongly-developed family feeling, and wanted no intruder into the circle, and partly because they saw their brother, to whom they looked to restore the family fortunes, about to saddle himself with the Beauharnais children. Lucien and Louis had seen Josephine in Paris, and to these youngsters she was an elderly woman, whose association with their brother they regarded as ridiculous.

### III

The story, still frequently repeated, that Barras rewarded the man who married his discarded mistress by giving him the Italian command, is, at first glance, so plausible, that it is worth discussing. It is as picturesque as the plot of a sensational novel,

but an examination of the evidence leads to its rejection. Here you have an ambitious soldier with a powerful friend. That friend is tired of his mistress, and suggests to the soldier that he should marry her, for the sake of his career. He will see that he is appointed to command in Italy. The soldier agrees, the friend goes to the lady and persuades her that this is the chance she has been waiting for. Marriage to a rising man will give her a settled position and an income and, as a wedding present, he, the friend, can guarantee the Italian command. The lady sees the advantages to her in such a step, and consents. The soldier gets his command, and the marriage takes place. Nothing could be neater, and nothing more in keeping with the character of Barras. Moreover, it is true that Barras did tell Josephine that if she married Bonaparte he would secure for him the post he wanted. Josephine repeated this to Bonaparte, who was, naturally, extremely angry, and told her, what was not true, that he needed nobody's patronage. Further, both Bourrienne and Lucien said it was a marriage of ambition, and Barras tells us that it was he who suggested the appointment to the Directors. These are the materials for the story. They break down on two important points.

First : military appointments were not the concern of Barras. It was Carnot who took charge of these matters. It was Carnot who had studied the scheme sent in by Bonaparte. And Carnot gives the direct lie to Barras, naming him, and explaining how, as soon as Bonaparte had begun to win victories, Barras encouraged his friends to say that the credit for the appointment was his. La Revellière-Lépeaux and Barras supported Carnot. Reubell had suggested Championnet, and Letourneur, Bernadotte, but they were overruled. La Revellière relates that what decided the Directors was the confidence they had in Bonaparte's plan of campaign. "It has been said," wrote La Revellière, "that Bonaparte's marriage with the widow Beauharnais was a condition of his obtaining the command. That is not so . . . I can affirm that the Directory was not influenced in its choice by Barras or by anybody else." Neither Carnot nor La Revellière were liars, but Barras made a practice of lying. The fact that Barras and Josephine both wanted the appointment for Bonaparte, and both intrigued to get it for him, cannot affect the plain



truth of the matter. Bonaparte was given the command on his merit, and for no other reason.

Second : Bonaparte was passionately in love with Josephine. She obsessed him. The evidence for this is his behaviour and his love-letters. Josephine herself recognized that he was sincerely in love with her, and told Mme. de Rémusat so. It was Josephine for whom the marriage was a marriage of ambition.

## IV

On March 9th, seven days after Paris had been startled by the announcement that the command of the Army of Italy had been given to a comparatively untried youngster, the marriage took place. It was a civil marriage only, and the ceremony was performed in the office of the mayor of the second *arrondissement*, now a room in the Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas. Everything about the ceremony was grotesque and even comical. The hour was fixed for eight o'clock in the evening. The witnesses arrived on time, with Josephine : Calmelet and Tallien for her, and Barras and an aide-de-camp for Bonaparte. In the best tradition of French farce, Barras was passing on one of his mistresses, as he was later to pass on another (Tallien's wife) to the financier Ouvrard. They waited for two hours, and the Mayor fell asleep. At ten o'clock Bonaparte, followed by a young Captain, Lemarois, burst into the room, woke the Mayor, and demanded to be married at once. The marriage certificate bore witness to the stupor of the newly-awakened Mayor. If he had still been asleep the document could not have been a more curious one. It recorded that Bonaparte was born in Paris, and gallantly added eighteen months to his age. To meet him more than half-way, Josephine subtracted four years from her own age. Captain Lemarois became a Major for the occasion. It was soon over, and husband and wife left the building in the rue d'Antin in the carriage which, with two magnificent black horses, Barras had persuaded the Directory to transfer from the old royal stables at Versailles to Mme. de Beauharnais. But the farce was not over. That night, in the rue Chantereine, when the young husband approached his wife's bed, he found that her poodle, Fortuné, was before

him. Fortuné bit the intruder in the leg. Later on, not without a secret motive, Bonaparte advised his cook to procure a very large and fierce dog.<sup>1</sup>

On March 10th he had his last interview with the Directors, and on March 11th set out from the rue Chantierine with Junot on that long journey which was to take him into history. "In two months," he said to Marmont, "we shall be either in Turin or back here in Paris."

## V

The military campaign of '96 has been discussed and described at length a thousand times, and will be so discussed and described as long as men are interested in the splendour of human achievement; but it is outside the scope of this book. What concerns us in the invasion and conquest of Italy is the political side of it. We are to see in it the beginning of that contest between Bonaparte and the Directory which is the undercurrent of all these years. The Directory flattered themselves that they had chosen a competent soldier, who would carry out their orders capably. What they wanted, apart from loot, was the spread of Jacobin ideas in the Italian States, the dethronement of the rulers of these States, and the establishment of a number of Republics, paying tribute to Paris, and governed by local Jacobins. There was nothing statesmanlike in their scheme. There was no question of allowing the nine principalities to absorb the new ideas slowly or of fostering friendship for the French Republic. Everything was to be done in a hurry, and by force rather than persuasion. The Republic was to show itself at its worst, because the Directors were pressed for money and for military victories. They had no idea of the true state of affairs in Italy. They represented the people as waiting to rise against their rulers, and

<sup>1</sup> According to Arnault, the cook took the advice. One day on the terrace at Montebello, Fortuné was killed by the cook's mastiff. Josephine bought another pet-dog. Bonaparte saw the cook trying to avoid him, and asked the reason. The cook explained that after what his dog had done. . . . "Have you still got him?" asked Bonaparte. "Yes," said the cook, "but he never comes into the garden since Madame bought another." "Let him come here as often as he likes," said Bonaparte, "Perhaps he'll rid me of this other dog." Fortuné had carried messages under his collar, for Josephine, when her children visited her in prison, during the Terror.

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they miscalculated the strength of the Catholic religion as badly as Napoleon was to miscalculate it in Spain. The attitude of the priests in France should have prepared them for the hatred with which their Jacobin Republic was regarded in Italy. They paid too much attention to the intellectuals in the Italian cities and too little to the peasants in the Italian countryside.

Bonaparte had other ideas. He had no intention of being a mere instrument of Jacobin shortsightedness. And it did not take him long to see the falsity of the Directory's picture of hordes of peasants and workmen accepting a French conquest with tears of gratitude. One facet of his genius enabled him to choose Berthier as his Chief of Staff; another enabled him to see the true state of affairs in the jumbled principalities of Italy, and to act, almost from the start, against the wishes of the Directors. He consented to the policy of loot and tribute, but decided to work with the local sovereigns, the Kings and the Grand Dukes, and not against them. His amazing victories, won with unheard of rapidity, and the money he sent to Paris, at first distracted the attention of the Directors from the fact that he was not obeying their instructions, and by the time they began to grow uneasy he was in a position to speak to them with authority; not as the haggard officer who set out, an unknown General grateful for a chance to win his spurs, but as the disturbing conqueror who was to frighten them so much when he returned to Paris. Had they been present at the famous scene in Nice when, on his arrival at the end of March, he summoned his four Divisional Generals to his house, they might have realized what kind of man they had employed. The four he summoned were Masséna, Sérurier, Augereau, and La Harpe. They were all tried soldiers and all far older than their new commander, for whose appointment they had nothing but contempt. When these four men, all of them tall and strongly-made, were shown into the room, they saw, at the end of it, the slight figure of their Commander. He was standing in a characteristic attitude, with his back to the hearth, well knowing what was in their minds. Sérurier, a sombre uninspired nobleman of the old school, was more than twice his age and he advanced disdainfully. Silent Masséna and the Swiss La Harpe gazed with wonder at the unimpressive figure

before them. Augereau, the swashbuckler, must have had his usual ribald laughter in his heart when he saw the miserable little man under whom he was to serve. They halted in front of him, keeping their plumed hats on, as was customary. Bonaparte took off his own hat, and, as soon as they had followed suit, replaced it. As he did so, he raised his head, and they saw the direct glance of those astonishing eyes. Not one of them dared to replace his hat on his head. The incident can be made to seem trivial, but it is important. He did what he was to do so often with so many men in the years to come : he mastered them, won their respect and their admiration in a flash. He then told them what he intended to do, and what he expected them to do. They were too dumbfounded to utter a word, and when he had said what he had to say, he dismissed them.<sup>1</sup>

He had arrived at Nice on March 24th, to take charge of an embittered, undisciplined army, the victim not only of bad organization in the high command, but of a horde of unscrupulous contractors, agents, and middlemen, who amassed large fortunes at the expense of the troops. The men of this army of Italy were mostly southerners, and therefore little fitted for the long periods of inactivity, varied by inconclusive offensive operations, to which the unenterprising Schérer had submitted them. The heart had gone out of them, and they had begun to lose the self-respect which enables well-trained soldiers to support the disappointments and the injustices of the Service. They had the appearance of bandits, and were acquiring the habits of bandits, roaming the countryside in rags, in search of the food which the commissariat could not supply. They were waiting for a General who would be also an administrator, an organizer, to revive in them the enthusiasm and the valour which they had forgotten, but not lost ; for a man of genius who would turn bandits again into soldiers, and use to the full the splendid gifts of such leaders as Masséna. The Generals realized that such a one had come to them, and on the day of his first review of the troops he won them over by the force of his character and by promising them not only glory, but food and full pockets. By April 2nd he had left Nice to effect the concentration of his units for the advance

<sup>1</sup> On leaving the room Masséna said, "The little rascal almost frightened me."

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through the Ligurian hills to Piedmont and the Lombard plain. He had fixed April 10th as the day of his opening move. Little more than two weeks between his arrival and the beginning of the immortal campaign! On April 12th Berthier was informing Masséna that they were about to make history. Nine days later after the victory of Mondovi, the Piedmontese asked for an armistice. On April 27th three envoys arrived from Turin to discuss the terms on behalf of the King of Sardinia, and the contest between Bonaparte and the Directors had begun.

Had he carried out the wishes of the Directors, he would have driven the King of Sardinia from his throne and manufactured a Jacobin revolution in Piedmont, with the aid of the intellectuals of the towns and the worst elements of the populace. But Piedmont wanted no revolution, and Bonaparte was not in the mood to waste time in debating the point with the Directors. He had seen the effect of victory on his troops and on the enemy, and he was eager to pursue his advantage, to turn on the Austrians and drive them out of Lombardy. He, therefore, had his terms ready, when the envoys arrived. They were told that they must give up, at once, Alessandria, Coni, Tortona, Valenza. It was a command to open the gates of Lombardy, and the envoys began to protest. Bonaparte, watch in hand, informed them that if they had not signed his terms by two o'clock in the morning, the French attack would continue. They signed. To Carnot Bonaparte wrote his military reasons for what he had done. To the Directors he sent various couriers to make known the full extent and significance of what he had so far achieved, and to lay before them the order of the day in which he resumed, for the troops, the details of the victories they had won. ". . . Every one of you, when he comes home to his village, will want to be able to say: 'I also was of the Army that conquered Italy.'"

He was far too astute to take, as yet, a high hand with the Directors in his correspondence. What he hoped to make them realize was that if he had not carried out their instructions, it was for purely military reasons. And the purely military reasons for what he was doing were obviously sound, as his messengers to the Directory tirelessly endeavoured to show. But the Directors

were far from satisfied. They were in a difficult position. Paris was intoxicated with the news from Italy, and the young General was getting all the praise. His letters to the Directors were models of respect, they were even, in the circumstances, modest and unassuming ; suggesting that to them belonged much of the glory won in Italy, and affirming that nothing could make him more unhappy than to give the impression of failing in his duty to them. He managed to insinuate that there seemed to be a misunderstanding, which he deplored. But the dilemma of the Directors was the undeniable fact that the terms signed at Cerasco were Bonaparte's terms, and that they did not correspond with the ideas which they had outlined to him in the Luxembourg before he set out for Italy. The letters were submissive, but the conduct was not. The letters were the letters of their General, who was still grateful for the chance that had been put in his way. But the conduct was the conduct of one who acted on his own authority. They began to be alarmed. Remembering the unimpressive officer they had interviewed, they began to take more notice of the stories that came to Paris from the Army ; particularly of the universal conviction that there was no limit to what this man could do. Suddenly they began to wonder if he was not perhaps making a fool of them. But he had acted with such speed that he would soon be too popular to rebuke and too big to remove.

Then came, in May, Lodi : a name that stands at the source of the Napoleonic epic. After Lodi they called him " the little corporal," and the men he had commanded offered him something which was almost worship. At Lodi, also, as he himself has told, he became aware of his capacities.<sup>1</sup> Ambition, which before had been a sullen fire in him, blazed up. The Directors chose this moment to recall to him the instructions which he appeared to have forgotten. It was time to abandon his projected march into the Tirol and to carry out his orders. Carnot was reminding him that he was merely a General employed by the Government, at the very moment when, as he said afterwards, " I no longer saw myself as a mere General, but as a man destined

<sup>1</sup> *Ce n'est que le soir de Lodi que je me suis cru un homme supérieur, et que m'est venue l'ambition d'exécuter les grandes choses qui, jusque-là, occupèrent ma pensée comme un rêve fantastique. (Napoleon to Gourgaud).*

to influence the fortunes of a people. I saw myself in history." It must have been with exasperation that he realized that he must not drive the Directors too far, since they could break him. But patience was one of his qualities, and he disguised his anger. He knew that what the Directors wanted more than anything else was money. With the utmost disdain, like a man throwing a bone to a pack of dirty mongrels, he collected several millions from Ferdinand, the Duke of Parma, and more from the Duke of Modena, and sent them, with cases of valuable loot, to Paris. He explained that if he had dethroned the rulers of these little States to make revolutions, the Directors would not have got their money; and, for the first time, he tried the weapon which he was to use at many a crisis in the days to come—the threat of laying down his command if they were dissatisfied with him.

But while his letters remained, on the whole, respectfully submissive, his conduct was the very reverse. What would the men in the Luxembourg have said if they could have seen the triumphal entry into Milan, and heard him promising the municipal authorities freedom of worship and the maintenance of private property, and speaking of "moderation," in an address that might have come from the head of a Government rather than from a General? What would they have thought of "You shall be free men, and you shall be more certain of your liberty than are the French?" What would they not have feared, if they had heard him saying, "There will always be rich and poor"? Was this the way to prepare a Jacobin insurrection?

We have a picture of him as he was at this period, after Lodi, from a man who was to have ample opportunity of observing him and talking to him during the coming days. Miot de Melito had been sent early in 1795 by the Committee of Public Safety to make a report on conditions in Tuscany. He was in Italy during the campaign of '96 and very quickly came to the conclusion that the destinies of that country would be ordered not by the Directory, but by the young General. Hearing that Bonaparte, at the beginning of June, '96, was on his way from Verona to Milan, he intercepted him at Brescia and had his first interview with him. Like others who had never seen Bonaparte, Miot had made an imposing image of the hero, to match the tales that were

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already told of him. And, like so many others, he was surprised and disappointed at his first glimpse of the man. "I saw," he says, "in the midst of numerous staff officers, a man of less than average height, and extraordinarily thin. His powdered hair, cut in a peculiar manner, in a straight line below his ears, fell to his shoulders. His coat, buttoned all the way up, was edged with a very thin line of gold embroidery. There was a tricolour plume in his hat. At the first glance his face did not appear to me to be handsome, but the features were sharply defined, the eye was alert and enquiring, the gestures vivacious and even brusque—revealing ardour. The brow, broad and thoughtful, was the brow of a thinker." They talked of Italy, and Miot noticed that Bonaparte's French was incorrect.<sup>1</sup> He continually used the word *amnistie* for *armistice*. But what struck Miot most was that he made no attempt to disguise his opinion of the Directory. At the end of the interview Miot saw him giving orders to Murat and Lannes and Berthier and Junot, and noted that in this Army there was none of the free-an-easy informality which the extreme Republicans favoured. Bonaparte had already established a distance between himself and his commanders, whose attitude was one, not of comradeship, but of respect and admiration.

The Directors were becoming more and more alarmed. Since the threat of resignation, called forth by a suggestion that Bonaparte and Kellermann should share the command in Italy, they had detected a tone of growing independence in the letters from their General. And he soon learnt that, just as he had to affect a certain acquiescence, they now thought themselves bound to flatter him and keep him in a good temper. Every time they called him to heel, he pretended to give way to them. Every time they read between the lines his exasperation, they pretended that they were satisfied with him. But he was bound to win in the end, because they knew that as his popularity increased, theirs, what little of it there had ever been, decreased. It was he who grew more sure of himself, and they who grew less sure of themselves. But, for a time, the comedy had to go on. They had to speak as though they could command, and he had to reply as though he dared

<sup>1</sup> Méneval gives several instances of Napoleon's bad French. He would write "*Enfin que*" for "*Afin que*," "*Enfanterie*" for "*Infanterie*," and so on.



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not disobey. They continued to preach the necessity for revolution all over Italy, while he prepared his system of alliances, to merge gradually into subject States. They dreamed of the sack of Rome and the dethronement of the Pope. He intended to use the Pope, to restore internal peace, not only in Italy, but in France. And he could claim that his plan was based on the reality of what he had seen in Italy—the power of the Church and the deep attachment of the people to their religion.

As the summer of '96 wore away, the situation between Bonaparte and the Government worsened. His popularity and his prestige increased, until the Directors became thoroughly frightened. It was perfectly obvious to them now that he was using the authority which his victories gave him to carry out his own policy in Italy, and that his policy was entirely different from theirs. It was also obvious that he was far too clever for them. There was still nothing in his letters to show that he was defying them. On the contrary, he seemed to be so anxious to please them that he would rather resign his command than tolerate the idea that they were not satisfied with his conduct of affairs. The Italian principalities were being reorganized more on Feuillant than on Jacobin lines; even when the Government was Republican, it was a clerical and conservative Republicanism. Large sums of money and works of art continued to come in, but it began to look as though that were Bonaparte's way of paying for his independence.<sup>1</sup> Yet, though both Bonaparte and the Directors knew that a battle of wits was in progress, the official correspondence remained as pompous as ever; as pompous as when, in May, the loot of Italian treasures was described as though the Italian cities ought to be honoured to be allowed to supply French museums with their choicest exhibits, in order to "repair the ravages of Vandalism" during the preceding years of the Revolution. But with every victory the Directors became more uneasy. And the defeats of Wurmser, culminating in the triumph of Arcole in November, revealed to them the unassailable position their artillery officer had won for himself. In Paris, crowds gathered outside the shops

<sup>1</sup> As early as May 7th, '96, the Directory had requested Bonaparte to appoint artists to choose the best pictures. "The Directory is convinced that you, citizen General, regard the glories of the fine arts as a part of the glory of the Army under your command," (Debidour—*Recueil des Actes du Directoire Exécutif*, vol. II, p. 333).

where the story of his personal exploits was told in sketches and engravings. The royalists might still call him "Vendémiaire;" but that only endeared him all the more to the common people. They had begun to see in him the soldier who would bring back peace. They drank his health in the workmen's cafés, they sang songs about him. It is no wonder that, after Arcole, the Directors informed him of their wishes in the matter of Rome, instead of sending him their orders.

NOTE.—The instructions handed to Bonaparte by the Directory, when he set out for Italy, were military and political. Those concerned with the military operations have recently been the subject of an interesting dispute. In 1936 the Italian historian, Signor Guglielmo Ferrero, published in Paris a book about the Italian campaign of '96 and '97, which was designed to prove that the credit for that campaign belongs to the Directory, whose detailed instructions Bonaparte carried out with success. There followed in the *Echo de Paris* a debate between the Italian historian and M. Louis Madelin. Signor Ferrero was forced to admit that the instructions handed to Bonaparte followed very closely a memorandum which the Directors had received eight months before. That memorandum was not signed. Why should it be attributed to Bonaparte? The reply was that the memorandum was in the hand of Junot, Bonaparte's aide-de-camp, and that Pontécoulant, who knew all the circumstances, always attributed it to Bonaparte. Furthermore another historian, M. Georges Girard, had discovered and published (in the *Figaro*) another memorandum dealing with the same subject, and in Bonaparte's hand. But Signor Ferrero would not be convinced. So M. Girard returned to the attack. After a great deal of research, aided by M. Jean Hanoteau, he discovered that the first memorandum, which Pontécoulant said had been written by Bonaparte himself, in his presence, had disappeared from the archives. It fell into the hands of a Pole in 1822, and was published in facsimile, in 1929, in a collection of Napoleonic manuscripts. The handwriting, according to Pontécoulant, had been almost illegible—which explains the copy made by Junot. This discovery proved conclusively that the Directory's instructions were Bonaparte's own plans for the campaign. To clinch the matter, a military writer in the *Revue Militaire Générale*, taking the campaign point by point, refuted all the assertions made by Signor Ferrero, and summed up in agreement with Mm. Madelin and Girard. (I take this account of the controversy from M. Madelin's *L'Ascension de Bonaparte*, Vol. II of the *Histoire du Consulat et de L'Empire*: Hachette, 1937; page 359 *et seq.*, note II.)

General Pierron's theory that Bonaparte had studied the Italian campaigns of Maillebois in 1745-6, and Bourcet's *Principes de la Guerre de Montagnes*, is discussed in Spenser Wilkinson's *The French Army Before Napoleon*, a collection of lectures published by the Clarendon Press in 1915.

## CHAPTER VI

### *The Elections of 1797 ; Leoben*

#### I

THOSE who have criticized Bonaparte's offer of plunder to his Army of Italy in '96 have been reminded that the plunder was very necessary at that moment, both for the Government and for the starving men. But his troops were veterans and were hardened to the rigours of campaigning, and they were no worse clothed or fed than the ragged recruits to whom Saint-Just said : " You lack everything, but what matter, so that men call you the first nation of the world ? " That springtime of the Revolution had passed and, with it, the fanaticism of the young visionaries.

When the millions began to arrive from Italy, the Directors delightedly pointed out to each other how much more effective than forced loans or issues of paper money is a properly conducted military campaign. In their first excitement they foresaw endless riches. Their imagination was touched. They wrote to their General to suggest an operation against the Holy House of Loreto, and the acquisition of " the immense treasure which superstition has been amassing for fifteen hundred years." They had heard it was valued at ten million livres, and they added : " You would be carrying out an admirable financial operation, which would hurt only a few monks." But it was not long before the Directors had to admit to themselves that it was the glory, and not the spoil, which was beginning to wake the people from their lethargy. The imagination of the people was kindled by the victories, not by the cases of masterpieces for the museums and the Generals' houses, and still less by the money for the Directors. The tale of the bridge of Lodi was being repeated in cafés and at street-corners. The legend had begun. In hearts no longer sombre with despair the perilous poetry of which Béranger, long years later, became the authentic voice, had taken root. And the Directors saw the danger. " They had thought," says Madelin,

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"to have released a falcon, which would return to them. But they had released an eagle."

However earnestly the Directory tried to associate itself with the Italian victories, however desperately it strove to attract to itself some of the enthusiasm of the people, it failed dismally. Its unpopularity went on increasing. By the end of the year, it was evident that the elections of '97 would provide unpleasant surprises. The movement of reaction was gathering impetus, and in their fear the Directors behaved in their customary fashion. First they arrested a group of the followers of Babeuf, who had attempted to seize the camp of Grenelle. Then they discovered a Royalist plot, and arrested a few agents. Meanwhile, the Councils benefited by the alarm of the Directors, and opened a campaign against them with a demand for the repeal of the proscriptive laws against the priests.

When the results of the elections were known, they were a more bitter blow than the Government had anticipated. To begin with, out of the 216 deputies forced on the electors a year ago, 211 were now rejected. All over the country the people had voted for the man who was likely to restore full religion. There was nothing else they cared to concern themselves with. So that what looked like an outburst of royalism was nothing of the sort. But, at the same time, royalists were elected—even Tronchet and de Séze, the Counsel of Louis XVI, and Fleuriau, a Minister of Louis XVI, and Pichegru, who was suspected of royalism. There was a pronounced swing to the right, and even quite moderate men, who had been connected with the more infamous events of the Revolution, were kept out. The royalists themselves were staggered at the results, and some even feared that they would be made a pretext for unconstitutional action by the Government. But on closer examination it becomes clear that in the new Government there would be no clear majority for any policy, nor even any broad united tendency. As before, the only deputies who really knew their own minds were those who, through every crisis, had held firm to power, and now once more found themselves safe for a further period ; our old friends the regicides, the Jacobins, the men of Thermidor whose heads were still in danger. These were far from content. They had hoped that the victories in

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Italy, and the possibility of peace, so longed for by the people, would have made them more popular. They were greatly mistaken.

The fears of the royalists were not unfounded. Reubell proposed to his four colleagues that the Chambers should pronounce the elections invalid and that a new group should be elected, who would be compelled to take an oath of hatred against royalists and anarchists. Even in their perplexity, the other four were not prepared to accept such a preposterous idea. Furthermore, they were soon encouraged to take heart by one evident result of the elections. Against what looked so like a royalist triumph, the various shades of revolutionary opinion—that is, those who were honest lovers of the Republic and those who had an interest in maintaining it—presently tended to merge. Even the Directors found themselves supported by the writers and scientists and philosophers of the Institute, who dreaded a Catholic revival, and by Mme. de Staël and her Club Constitutionnel, who dreaded the return of the Bourbons. But it was soon clear that they would have trouble with the two Chambers. At the very first meeting of the Ancients and the Five Hundred, on May 21st, '97, the moderate Barbé-Marbois was elected President of the Ancients and Pichegru President of the Five Hundred. To the further consternation of the Directors, their new colleague, in place of Letourneur, was Barthélemy, a man of little importance in himself, but well-known as a Marquis of the old régime. He was elected instead of a nominee of Carnot, the regicide Cochon. One week later the Councils opened their attack. They demanded an enquiry into the financial situation, and showed themselves particularly determined to find out to what uses the money sent by Bonaparte had been put. They followed this up by proposing the establishment of religious freedom. The result was to draw still more closely together the various parties attached, by interest or principle, to the Revolution. These rallied to the three Directors, La Revellière, Barras, and Reubell. At last there was a debate of the first importance in which the masses of the people had an interest.

II

The big part which the religious quarrel was to play in preparing the conspiracy of Fructidor became clear when Camille Jordan presented in the Five Hundred his report on the religious question. The report made four proposals :

1. Liberty of the Catholics in every parish to choose their priest.
2. Liberty of the priest to carry out his duties without being subjected to any oath.
3. Liberty to ring the bells of the Churches.
4. Liberty for every religious body to have its own cemeteries.

As soon as these propositions were known, the people, without waiting for any debate in the Council, opened the Churches, rang the bells, and welcomed the non-juring priests who came out of hiding. Jordan's report infuriated the Jacobins, and the subsequent debate on it proved how deeply men felt on this religious question and what a fierce conflict there was between Catholics and anti-Catholics. The anti-Catholics insisted that the return of the Faith would mean the end of the Republic, as though a Republic must, of its nature, be atheistic, or, at best, vaguely deistic. But the opposition of those who had no active dislike of the Catholic religion was founded on the fear that its restoration would open the way for the return of the Monarchy. They knew that the influence of the priests would be against the Revolution. And they had another weapon to use. The re-establishment of religion would mean that the present owners of Church property would have to surrender it. But, in spite of a ferocious campaign in the Jacobin papers, the propositions were voted in the Five Hundred, and with some slight alterations were sent to the Senate to be ratified and made law. The proscriptive decrees against religion were thus removed.

In both Chambers there was now a majority of moderate men. They differed as to the kind of Government they wanted, some favouring a Republic, others a form of Monarchy, but on one point they were sufficiently agreed to act together as a majority.

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They had been elected, for the most part, by the people of the countryside, with a mandate to restore religion, and to put an end to persecution, and the effect of Jordan's report showed that at last, as I have said, there was a debate in which the people would be interested, a debate which concerned the realities of their lives. But if the religious debate roused the people, it roused also the Jacobins, and rallied to them all who feared that they might lose by any serious attempt to treat the Catholics justly. Barras and Reubell were swift to seize the religious revival as a pretext for putting an end to the movement of reaction. They knew by now that they could count on the support of the Army. General Jourdon had made one of the most violent speeches against the restoration of worship and the return of the priests. But Barras and Ruebell now had Carnot against them. He had always loathed the extremists, and was too honest to support an unconstitutional act to save himself; still less to save colleagues for whom he had so little respect. Barthélemy would certainly be against them. And La Revellière was no friend to them. It was therefore an awkward moment for them. But the excitement aroused by the religious question was a piece of luck which they did not deserve. La Revellière was a man of principle. It was not any sympathy with the illegality contemplated by his two colleagues which brought him into their camp. It was his hatred of the Catholic religion. He hesitated, since he did not at all like what he was doing, but the streak of fanaticism in his character drove him to a decision which he regretted. He said afterwards that it was he who was really responsible for Fructidor, and it was certainly his support which, by giving the extremists a majority in the Directory, gave them the confidence they needed. They could also be sure of four of the six Ministers, who were Jacobins. But Barras, who was the ringleader, had to make quite certain of success. Too much was at stake for him. After each crisis which he and his friends survived, they found themselves more unpopular, and it had become a question of how long they could go on playing this game, while France disintegrated. The crisis which they now faced was the most serious they had had to meet. If they failed, they were finished. If they succeeded, it would be by encouraging the more violent of their supporters, to whom they would once

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more be indebted. Then, in the usual attempt to keep their balance, they would have to act against the very extremists to whom they owed their political salvation. In the old days Barras and his agents could have called up the mobs to help them. But the men who might have formed a mob were now too indifferent to respond to the rhetoric of the streets. They had no interest in saving any faction. Therefore the only hope was the Army, and it was a strong hope.

Neither side was well enough informed of the strength of the other to risk a direct challenge. But the royalists and the moderates began a tentative attack by demanding the dismissal of the four Jacobin Ministers. The reply of the Directors was to dismiss Cochon and Bénézech, the two Ministers who were in sympathy with the Right. And these two Ministers happened to be in key positions, the one at the Ministry of Police, the other at the Ministry of the Interior. From that moment it was evident that Barras and Reubell were in command at the Luxembourg.

### III

The lack of agreement between the Directors and Bonaparte became serious at the very moment when the victorious general was powerful enough and popular enough to follow his own policy rather than theirs. After Lodi the Directors began to wonder whether their servant was not showing too many signs of independence. There was a hardening tone in his correspondence with them. After Arcole, their alarm grew. Though he could still make his manner one of deference, and could appear to be ready to obey their instructions, they noticed that he did not really obey them. They found themselves induced, by a far abler intriguer, to give their consent to administrative arrangements already put into execution against their will, and even to agreements concluded against their orders. Bonaparte's reply to their scheme for treating Italy as a mere lump of conquered territory, destined to pay tribute to the bankrupt Government of France, was to encourage the organization of small Republics. When they raised objections, he replied that they should give him their



confidence, since he, being on the spot, was the best judge of what ought to be done. But, well knowing how this language would sound in the Luxembourg, he developed his habit of threatening to offer his resignation if the Directors were dissatisfied with him. He was not going to give them the chance of accusing him of inordinate personal ambition. It was a safe move, since both he and they knew that it was too late not to take him at his word. He was indispensable to the Government, and he was rapidly becoming the idol of the people. Nor was he above dropping a hint of possible blackmail, as a warning to them. He rubbed into them the gigantic sums of money which had been sent to them from Italy, and the further gigantic sums which might be sent, and spoke vaguely of disorder at the Treasury. It was as good as warning them that if he wanted to, he could tell a startling tale. The Directors, who had the best of reasons for knowing that any enquiry into the financial situation might be very awkward for them, had no course but to pretend to give him a free hand in Italy. At the same time they decided that the hour had come to open peace discussions, before Bonaparte could win any more victories, and become even more popular. But they did not intend that the negotiations should be in the hands of Bonaparte, partly because there was a great gulf between his ideas and theirs, partly because a successful peace, negotiated by him, would set the seal on his fame.

Carnot had under his hand a thirty-year old General in whom he put great trust. He was an intelligent soldier of Irish descent, named Clarke, rather given to hero-worship, and determined to make a brilliant career for himself. He was now given his chance. He was to proceed to Vienna to negotiate a Treaty, paying Bonaparte a formal visit on his way. It can be imagined that such a man saw at once the great opportunity which had come his way. As the envoy of the Directors he would have the amusing task of putting in his place the twenty-seven-year-old soldier who was causing so much discussion in Paris. He found Bonaparte at Milan, and, like so many others, was immediately disarmed. Here was the right kind of hero to worship, and Clarke saw at once that, for a man of ambition, there could be no hesitation in choosing between him and the Directors. He chose Bonaparte,

who convinced him that the moment for peace had not arrived. Austria was not so completely beaten as to consider terms—a fact which was proved by the refusal of the Chancellor, Thugut, to give Clarke a passport, and by the orders given to the old Marshal Alvinzi to march through Tirol to Mantua with 80,000 men, to relieve Wurmser there, and to throw the French out of Northern Italy. Bonaparte had not only won over Clarke, but had also spoilt the game of the Directory, which was to surrender Lombardy to Austria. To complete the discomfiture of the men in the Luxembourg, they received a letter from Clarke which disclosed, in no uncertain manner, the extent to which Bonaparte had dazzled him. “All the little tricks of intrigue fail—he sees through them at once.” On the morrow of Rivoli, when the alarm of the Directors was becoming panic, their desire for peace negotiations was transmitted to Bonaparte through Clarke.

At the same time the question of the Papacy arose, to show that there was another important matter on which the Directors and their General held very different views. Not realizing that they were dealing with a statesman, they expected him to march on Rome and finish with the Catholic religion. This time they issued no order, they expressed a wish. Bonaparte, who intended to use the Catholics in his scheme of unification for France, and may already have conceived the idea of the Concordat, had no intention of spoiling his plans. He began to march towards Rome, knowing that the Pope would send out emissaries. At Tolentino he offered his terms, which included a tribute of thirty millions—the price he paid to the Directors for his disobedience. To console them further for his refusal to drive the Pope from Rome, he told them that the old machine “will break down of its own accord.” He was far too intelligent to believe that.

The Archduke Charles determined to make one more attempt to defeat Bonaparte, by crossing the Piave and turning the right flank of the French round Vicenza. He was completely out-manceuvred, and the French armies swept forward into Austria. At Judenburg an armistice was signed. Shortly afterwards two Austrian plenipotentiaries, Beauregard and Merveldt, arrived at the Castle of Leoben, where Bonaparte had established his headquarters, to discuss the preliminaries of a treaty of peace. Once

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more the General and the Directors were at cross purposes. They expected him to march on Vienna, and they were now less anxious than he was to conclude a treaty at once. Their eyes were on the Rhine and their hopes on Hoche and Moreau. If they could conclude a victorious campaign by advancing on Vienna, the Directory might use them as a counterweight to Bonaparte, and might even succeed in conducting the subsequent negotiations themselves. As to the actual negotiations, while the Directory was willing to give up Lombardy and some of the smaller Republics, in order to get the left bank of the Rhine, Bonaparte would refuse, at any price, to surrender any Italian territory. The point of view of the Directors seemed the more reasonable one, since it was well known that the Emperor could only be persuaded to give up the left bank and the Low Countries by receiving as compensation certain Italian territories. But Bonaparte had his own ideas.

On April 14th, 1797, the Austrian plenipotentiaries were joined at Leoben by Gallo, a Neapolitan with some reputation as a subtle diplomat. Thugut's instructions were that the left bank of the Rhine must be retained by the Empire, even if that meant giving up Lombardy and the Low Countries. But in this case Austria must be compensated with Italian territory—possibly Venice. Before these instructions arrived Bonaparte had set to work, in a manner that clearly showed the Emperor's envoys that they were dealing with one who had very strong ideas on the dignity and prestige of the Republic. The Emperor regarded Bonaparte as a usurper, and the Republic as a temporary Government which need not be officially recognized. Bonaparte assured the envoys that whether Austria recognized the Republic or not was their concern, and of no importance to France. But "the Republic is in Europe what the new-risen sun is on the horizon," and if there were people who didn't want to see it, so much the worse for them.

The negotiations were over in twenty-four hours. Austria had accepted vague provisions. She was to lose the Low Countries, but there would be compensation later, when peace was signed. There was no claim to the left bank of the Rhine, and the French would evacuate the possessions of the Emperor, except for the

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Belgian provinces. But Austria also accepted certain secret provisions which showed the proceedings in a clearer light. France was to keep Lombardy and Modena. Austria was to get considerable Venetian territory, and France the rest. When the envoys pointed out that Venice was not Bonaparte's to give away, he drew their attention to the Partition of Poland and assured them that it would be easy for him to find a pretext for attacking Venice. What Bonaparte wanted was to settle the preliminaries quickly, so that he could then turn his attention to his other tasks—the organization of his Italian conquests and the study of conditions in France as they affected his future. Nothing was further from his mind than an abandonment of the claim to the left bank of the Rhine. And the affair of Leoben is an example of his two methods. He knew how to act with astonishing speed, but he also knew how to be patient. When Clarke arrived on April 20th, to take part in the negotiations, he found a *fait accompli*. To the Directors he wrote that there was an obvious difference between the ideas of the Directors and those of Bonaparte, but "A new Alexander has settled matters, with the intention of serving the Republic to the best of his ability." Clarke was a useful conquest for Bonaparte.

It was by now quite obvious to the Directors that Bonaparte cared nothing for their orders or their opinions. The news of Leoben enraged them, and their Minister of Foreign Affairs, Delacroix. To make matters worse, Bonaparte did not bother to make out a case for what he had done, or to persuade them to agree with him. He contented himself with the old threat of resignation, and spoke of returning to civil life. By now they had a very good idea of what the return to civil life of such a man really meant. They were being manoeuvred into the position, in the eyes of the public, of rulers who refused to make use of the Italian victories to bring peace to the weary country. In the circumstances, and to the harassed Directors the same circumstances seemed to recur over and over again, there was nothing they could do but approve what had occurred at Leoben, and to confirm him in the position which he had chosen for himself as France's official representative wherever he happened to be. And at that moment came news of the massacre of the French

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troops in the Venetian town of Verona, an event which put Venice and her territories at the mercy of the French, and enabled Bonaparte to assure the disgruntled Directors that they would soon see that the provisions of Leoben had given no true idea of what might be expected when peace came to be signed. Venice, he said, would pay Austria for the Rhine. Lombardy, Modena, and the rest would be retained, as well as the Belgian provinces. After Leoben the Austrian envoys had appeared satisfied, but that was because they had not penetrated Bonaparte's mind as he had penetrated Thugut's and the Emperor's. The outbreak at Verona served Bonaparte's purpose. Austria had not expected to acquire Venice so easily.

### IV

Marmont in his Memoirs describes Bonaparte during the Italian campaign, surrounded by his young Generals. These were the days when they were like a happy family. Renown and honour and riches had not yet warped their characters, or sown the seeds of envy and jealousy. In public, Bonaparte spoke and acted as the master of them all, and all were content to obey him. But in private, he was their companion, and his jests had not that bitterness which they acquired later on. Contrary to the popular report, he slept a great deal, but when he had to call on his extraordinary powers of endurance, he never allowed sleep to interfere with his work. On these occasions he could snatch a few moments for sleep anywhere or at any time. *Aucune passion basse ne trouvait accès dans nos cœurs*, writes Marmont as he recalls the friendships of that time of youth and hope. And very often in later years he must have looked back with infinite regret, remembering his black treachery. Nearly forty years later, when the Emperor was long dead, he wandered unhappily over the battlefields of Lodi and Arcole, dreaming of the great days. He died in Venice in 1852, a lonely exile, and the last of all the Marshals of Napoleon.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Bonaparte at Montebello*

AT the end of April, 1797, after the negotiations at Leoben, Bonaparte established his headquarters in the castle of the Marchese Givelli at Montebello, outside Milan. But those who visited him there in the spring and summer of that year noticed that it was more like a royal palace, with a court in attendance, than a military headquarters. Bonaparte himself had no taste for luxury and splendour, but he knew the value of these things, and was well aware that his fame now called for the conventional background of a conqueror and a lawgiver. The moment had come for the unkempt, ill-dressed soldier to put on an air of majesty, and it was here at Montebello that he rehearsed for the first time the part of sovereign which he was to play later. Polish legionaries guarded the castle and its approaches. Nobody could expect to dine at his table without a special invitation or, one might say, command. He even revived the royal custom of eating in public. Inhabitants of the district were admitted to the hall where he dined, and to one or other of the gaping peasants or shopkeepers he would address a gracious word as calmly as though he had been brought up to live in this fashion. There were banquets, festivities, pleasure parties to places of interest or beauty. Surrounded by his family and his young Generals, and always ready to receive the distinguished men and women who came to see the hero of whom everybody was talking, Bonaparte had abandoned that dark look of earlier days, and was prepared to be gay and entertaining—though always marking the distance between himself and the members of his Court. The comments of some such rough soldier as Augereau on the life at Montebello would have been worth hearing. And there was a girl there who must have smiled to think that four short years ago she and her sister Elisa had run wild in the countryside round le Bausset. Her name was Paulette, and she was a renowned robber of orchards. After Thermidor the family was living in Marseilles, in conditions of poverty. The mother, with the help of a third daughter, Caroline, managed to scrape together enough

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for food and lodging. Thither Barras sent Stanislas Fréron, and he and Paulette fell in love. He was forty, she sixteen. It was the familiar story of a schoolgirl infatuation and the rake's last hope of settling down. During the Italian campaign Bonaparte, the brother of the wild girl, was receiving letters from Fréron, begging him to persuade his mother to consent to the match, and from Paulette, vowing she would never love another. But times were changed.<sup>1</sup> Paulette had now become, at her brother's request, Pauline, and this future Princess was to marry General Leclerc in the chapel at Montebello.<sup>2</sup> Her sister, Elisa, was already Mme. Bacchiocchi.

Rank and wealth, beauty and intelligence crowded the rooms of the castle. Scientists came to discuss their theories with him and listened in amazement to his debates with Monge and Berthollet. Writers brought him their works, poets dedicated their odes to him, artists and composers debated his ideas on painting and music. He had to listen to speeches filled with grotesque adulation, and to receive presents for himself and for Josephine. He was accessible to all, and to all he exhibited his charm, his intelligence, and his youthful gaiety. But, in the midst of the dancing and the music, the laughter and the revels, this young man of twenty-seven, of whom all Europe was talking, remembered that he had work to do, and he would shut himself up for days and nights on end, to solve the problems which confronted him. The three principal questions which engaged him during this spring and summer were the future of Italy, the peace negotiations with Austria, and the state of affairs in France, as it affected his plans.

First, Italy. He had no illusions about this shapeless mass of Kingdoms, principalities, and duchies. Neither the enthusiastic welcome given to the French troops, nor the rhapsodies of the intellectuals had deceived him into thinking that his conquest could be followed immediately by unification. Nobody could appreciate better than he the poetry of the idea of liberation, or the exalted sentiments of those Italians whose imagination

<sup>1</sup> In his memoirs Marmont says that Bonaparte offered him Pauline for his wife, during the interlude at Montebello. This is not true. Leclerc, when sent to announce the results of Leoben to the Directory, told Arnault that he was betrothed to Pauline.

<sup>2</sup> In January '96 Bonaparte was writing to Joseph that there was no objection to Paulette marrying Fréron, if Fréron had a great deal of money. By May '96 there was plenty of objection, and Bonaparte would not hear of the match.

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had been kindled by the new ideas brought by the Republican armies. But whatever vision he had of the future Kingdom of Italy, he was called, at the moment, to be a statesman, and to look at what was before him with the eyes of a realist. That penetrating eye had told him that the peasants did not really care very much who governed them, and that they were not people who would take kindly to any sudden changes, even though they could be persuaded that those changes would be in their favour and to their interest. His task, for the present, was cautiously to guide and inspire the complicated tangle of Republics, protectorates, and federations which he had set up; to prepare them slowly for their fusion, one day, into a Kingdom, with one code of laws. Meanwhile, their local customs and traditions must be interfered with as little as possible. They must not be frightened or hustled. He had nothing but contempt for the puerilities of the Directors, who imagined that medieval states could be transformed by force into tempestuous Jacobin Republics.

His own aim, like theirs, was conquest; but the conquest was to come by easy stages, in the Roman manner, so that, in the end it would be an incorporation into his European scheme. His policy was to do as little violence as possible to existing institutions or governments, but to show the local rulers and their subjects what exactly these new ideas were which they were being offered. Instead of setting up in the territories he had conquered unpopular governments which would depend on the presence of French troops, he offered treaties. Instead of encouraging the extremists, who were ready and eager to overthrow all existing authority, he worked with the level-headed, conservative elements. For he was determined to make clear in the eyes of the world that there was nothing to fear and everything to hope from the acceptance of what France had to offer, and that the popular idea of the Revolution as a destructive force was not his idea of it. He made it his business to undo the mischief which the Jacobins had done, and to present the Revolution as a work of construction, so that men would remember the ideas of '89, and come to regard the subsequent civil strife and bloodshed as due to special circumstances at an exceptional moment, and not as the necessary machinery of change. Here



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at Montebello he knew what it was he intended to do, and he set to work to do it as though he were already the ruler of France.

Secondly, the question of peace with Austria. In this matter, also, he acted as his own master. He had, first, to persuade Gallo and Merveldt, the Austrian envoys, that he had no more use for the phrase "the integrity of the Empire"; in other words, that he intended to have the Rhine. Furthermore, the envoys knew that if the Directors would willingly give up all the Italian conquests to get the left bank of the Rhine, Bonaparte had very different ideas. Another dream was taking shape in his incessantly active mind. He would hand over Venice to Austria, but would keep a valuable portion of Venetian territory. His eye was on Corfu and the islands, and, beyond these, the Orient.

Thirdly, there was France to watch. And this was his most important problem, because, all his other schemes depended on his choosing the right moment to assume power in Paris. He was kept well-informed of the situation during this summer of 1797, both by his own agents and by correspondents of all parties. He knew that the reports of those who returned to Paris after seeing him at Montebello were raising expectations of some stroke which might end the misrule of the Directory, for he was growing less and less discreet in his conversation as it became more and more evident that the Directors were afraid of him, and that they could not conceal from themselves the extent of his popularity. Miot de Melito had come to Montebello, and had many conversations with Bonaparte, all of which showed that the ideas he had expressed in a rather more guarded manner after his first victories, had developed considerably. One day, in the gardens at Montebello, walking with Miot and the Milanese nobleman, Melzi, who afterwards became Vice-President of the Italian Republic, Bonaparte revealed freely what was in his mind. The conversation has become justly famous, for it explains why he did not follow the advice of friends and admirers who wanted him to make his bid for power at once. Miot marks this occasion as the one on which Bonaparte threw off his mask more completely than in any of his previous talks. From the description of what occurred it would seem that "conversation" is the wrong word. It was more an address, which lasted two hours, and it seemed to Miot that Bonaparte

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felt the need to think aloud, and that he followed his custom of unburdening himself to anybody who happened to be with him.

Bonaparte began by telling them that he was only at the beginning of his career, that what he had done so far was nothing to what he was going to do. Did they imagine, he asked, that he had won his victories in Italy merely to make the lawyers of the Directory famous? Or to found a Republic? He regarded a Republic as an impossibility for France. Glory, not liberty, was what the French wanted. "And let the Directory try to take away my Command, they'll soon see who is the master!" What the nation needed, he said, was a leader, an illustrious leader, and not a lot of theories of government, or the speeches of ideologues. Turning to Melzi, he told him that in Italy there was even less desire for a Republic than in France, that he would never give back Lombardy or Mantua to Austria, and that Austria's indemnity for her losses would be part of the territory of Venice. When his listeners expressed their horror at this monstrous piece of cynicism, he told them not to cry out before they were hurt. He had no intention of making peace at present, as it was not to his interest to be finished with Austria too quickly. "If peace is made," he continued, "and I am no longer commanding my army, I shall lose my power and my position, and shall be reduced to hanging round the Luxembourg to pay court to the Directors. It is my intention to leave Italy only when I can play a similar rôle in France, and that moment has not come. *La poire n'est pas mûre.*" All this, however, he told them, did not depend entirely on him. The Bourbons were on the move again in Paris, and he had no wish to contribute to their triumph. "I certainly want to weaken the Republican party one day, but it must be to my own profit and not to that of the old dynasty. Meanwhile, it is necessary to keep in step with the Republicans. Peace may have to be made to satisfy the gaping crowds in Paris, but if there must be peace, I must be the man to make it. If I left it to someone else, the merit of bringing peace would win more esteem in public opinion than all my victories."

There is no doubt whatever that these remarks contain the substance of Bonaparte's thoughts at this time. Whether he spoke all the words reported by Miot we can never know, for

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there is always the temptation for a chronicler who has been friendly with a great man to add to or subtract from a conversation. But in reading the reported conversations of Bonaparte, or of any highly intelligent man with an active brain, it must always be remembered that phrases thrown off carelessly, and of no more importance than an angry exclamation, will be snatched out of their context and used against him later. It would be easy to take the two and a half pages of Miot and produce from them the conventional picture of Bonaparte the cynical adventurer, who cared not a sou for anything but his own advancement; and just as easy to choose some other speech which would show Bonaparte the idealist, whose only ambition was the good of his country. The importance of the talk with Miot and Melzi is in what Bonaparte had to say about his intentions, and not in his apparent contempt for the French people.

Throughout the early summer he was kept well-informed of events and currents of opinion in Paris, and he soon saw that there would have to be an intervention by troops to save the extreme party in the Directory. He, by lending his support to these discredited men, would be repeating the unsavoury work of Vendémiaire. But since Vendémiaire he had come a long journey, and there was now no question of his personal intervention. He realized that the people were so weary of misrule that even the return of the Bourbons was a possibility. But such an event would completely upset all his plans, and he did not need the prompting of Talleyrand to make up his mind to support the Government. As for the Army, he knew that though they despised the lawyers, their strong hatred was reserved for the men who were reported to be plotting a counter-revolution. Such men, whether noblemen or political agitators, were, in the eyes of the Army, traitors, who would not only undo the work of the Revolution, but would, in their desire for peace, give away the fruits of so many famous victories. The young Generals, to whom the Revolution had opened such magnificent careers, needed no encouragement to express their opinions on exaggerated accounts of the Royalist menace.

As soon as he had decided to support the three Jacobin Directors, Bonaparte let Paris know, in no uncertain manner, the opinion of the men under his command. A military review in

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Milan, on July 19th, was made the occasion of presenting addresses of loyalty to the Government on behalf of the Generals commanding the various divisions. They were read out to the troops, and Bonaparte dispatched them to Paris, with a covering letter. Never in history can any Government have received such embarrassing expressions of devotion. For the addresses, of which there were a dozen, were (with the exception of a milder one from Bernadotte) chiefly concerned with threats to the Royalists and the priests. And the language was that of the Club of the Jacobins in its great days. Masséna asked if the road to Paris offered any more obstacles than the road to Vienna. Augereau thundered: "Tremble! It is only a step from the Adige to the Rhine and the Seine," and spoke of infamous priests, dastardly assassins, and Royalist murderers. The addresses were published in the *Moniteur*, and the Royalists could not have been told more plainly what steps the Directors were about to take.

In the middle of August, when Augereau was already in Paris to lend his sword to the Directors, Bonaparte, as though his mind were at rest, went off for a couple of days to an island in Lake Maggiore, taking Miot, Berthier, and Josephine with him. He was in one of his gay moods. He reminded them that he had just had his twenty-eighth birthday and talked of his early days. His free and easy manner with Josephine, which Miot calls the taking of "conjugal liberties," was embarrassing to the two men and they could not induce him to talk politics. Later in the day he praised Talleyrand and expressed extreme dislike of Roederer for his behaviour on August 10th, 1792. He said he could never have confidence in such a man. Nevertheless Roederer was to play a most delicate and important part in the conspiracy of Brumaire.

*La poire n'est pas mûre.* These words are the clue to Bonaparte's patience at a time when many expected him to seize power. Marmont elaborating the phrase, said that conditions in France were not yet bad enough to justify a *coup de force*. Nine-tenths of the citizens would have been against it. Writing later in his life to his brother Joseph, Bonaparte told him that all his successes were due to his ability to judge the right moment for action: to wait, and then to strike at a time when the blow would have its full force. That was his policy now.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Treachery of Pichegru*

#### I

THE failure of the Quiberon expedition, which destroyed royalist hopes of a rising in the West, had been the failure of only part of a plan for the restoration of the Bourbons. That plan included an insurrection in the Eastern provinces of the Dauphiné, the Franche-Comté, and Alsace, aided by the seduction of French troops, officials, and even Generals. Lord Grenville, the English Foreign Minister, was ready to supply his agents with adequate sums of money. But the principal agent, Wickham, believed so firmly that lavish bribery would necessarily procure the results he anticipated, that it was some time before he noticed that he was buying nothing but vague promises. He and his colleagues had to give the impression that there was no ulterior motive in their support of the Bourbons, whereas the object of the English Government was to get from the restored Monarchy what they could not get from the Republic, a promise to abandon the claim to the left bank of the Rhine. The Comte de Provence, the future Louis XVIII, suspected by now that nobody was ready to help him out of admiration or affection. That was why, on the death of the Dauphin in the Temple, he had been so eager to be recognized by foreign powers, and particularly by Austria. As the King of France, marching into his own country at the head of his own troops, he would enjoy sufficient prestige in the eyes of Europe to make those who had befriended him in his destitution disinclined to march with him as invaders. But as a mere Pretender, following on the heels of Condé, Grenville's pensioner, he would be in a very different position. It might turn out that he was merely opening a gate into France for the Austrians. But neither Austria nor England was willing to recognize Provence as Louis XVIII. Nor was there any enthusiasm for him among the French people. Sorel has summed up the position: "The restoration of the

Monarchy was the sole object of the alliance of the émigrés with Europe, and that alliance with Europe made the restoration impossible." The English Government was throwing its money away.

But Condé, waiting on the right bank of the Rhine, was even more credulous than Wickham. Thanks to the plentiful supply of money from Wickham, Condé's headquarters at Mulheim swarmed with intriguers, who, for a reasonable salary, were ready to carry out their own plans or anybody else's; and no doubt this atmosphere of activity and hopefulness encouraged Condé to persevere. He had information of the disgraceful state of the Army of the Rhine, which was opposite to him on the left bank. The men were ill-paid, ill-fed, ill-equipped, and exhausted. It occurred to him that they were ripe for desertion, and he had heard stories that they had no bad feelings against the exiled nobility, and even sang monarchist songs. So he issued appeals to them to join him, and even caused to be distributed a number of *billets de recruteurs*, promising that officers who brought bodies of men with them should be confirmed in their present ranks. But it occurred to Condé and those about him that a bolder stroke might achieve more than a thousand small intrigues. Why not seduce a general with a big reputation, and arrange with him to change sides, bringing with him his entire Army? Then it would be possible to talk of a march on Paris.

Some years before the Revolution Condé had been present at artillery exercises at Besançon. One of the pieces was fired while it was being sponged, and the gunner's arm was blown off. Another of the team, who got a wound in the thumb, was reprimanded by Condé, and took the rebuke in so soldierly a manner that Condé made him a sergeant. The gunner's name was Pichegru, and he was now at the height of his fame. After the victorious campaigns in Alsace, Belgium, and Holland he had commanded in Paris during the riots of Germinal, 1795, and had saved the Convention, before coming into Alsace to take command of the Army of the Rhine and Moselle. He was in the prime of life, thirty-four years of age, and a native of Franche-Comté, one of the provinces where an insurrection was to be stirred up. Moreover, it was common talk that he was a Republican of the milder sort, one who had served under the Monarchy, and looked

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for its eventual restoration. Condé had even heard a rumour that he was only too anxious to enter into negotiations with the royalists. For he was an ambitious man, who, with his successful career, had acquired expensive tastes, and so would be likely to want to safeguard his future. Pichegru arrived at his headquarters before Mayence at the end of April, 1795, with instructions from the Committee of Public Safety to cross the Rhine, take Mannheim and Mayence, and advance into Germany before the slow-moving Wurmser had time to concentrate his forces. But the Army was in no condition to attack at once, and its general, who had closely observed the dispirited Parisians, and noted the unpopularity of the Government, was in no mood to take risks with his reputation as a victorious soldier. While he prepared his plan of campaign, without undue haste, the intrigues which were to involve him in a sordid and unsuccessful adventure were on foot. By the end of May, Wickham and Roques de Montgaillard, a royalist agent, had had conversations with Condé at Mulheim, and it was decided to approach Pichegru. Montgaillard, working with Demougé, an Alsatian lawyer who became an Austrian spy, with Courant, a Swiss who became a Prussian spy, and with the infamous Swiss librarian from Neufchatel, Fauche-Borel, set the trap into which Pichegru walked.

## II

For a long time the question of Pichegru's treachery was a famous historical debate. His inexplicable mediocrity in the campaign of 1795 might have led to suspicion had not the loss of his command made many regard him as a victim of the Directory. The answer to rumours of his intrigues was his election as President of the Five Hundred. Even when the evidence against him was published before Fructidor, and the papers captured by Moreau strengthened that evidence, his admirers would not believe that the documents were not forgeries. Carnot thought him innocent. After Fructidor his deportation and consequent sufferings increased the sympathy for him. One would have thought that his pension from the English Government and his part in the conspiracy of Cadoudal would have led even his defenders to see in his relations

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with Condé the beginning of his work for the royalist cause. But it was not so. The mysterious circumstances of his death suggested that he was still a victim of the Government ; that he had been conveniently done to death not so much for what he had done as for what he might do. And so, when the Bourbons returned, his services were openly recognized, and it was not until 1830 that his statue was thrown down and his treachery regarded as a matter of common knowledge. Even so, the debate continued, and as late as 1901 Ernest Daudet could write a very skilful defence of Pichegru's conduct in '95-'97, pleading that his hero was guilty rather of indiscretion than treason. In 1908 came the far more thorough and less biased examination of the question by Caudrillier, whose conclusion was that Pichegru had betrayed the Republic.

Caudrillier's amply documented book, written after he had given many years to the study of this question—he had already begun, in 1900, to publish his conclusions—makes it easy to-day to condemn Pichegru ; but it also reveals the difficulty of arriving at any decision without the fullest study of the evidence. First, Pichegru took great care to commit himself as little as possible in writing. Secondly, the unsavoury agents, Montgaillard and his assistants, were fluent liars. It is quite clear that, in their anxiety to please Condé, and so assure their pay, they represented Pichegru as a far more enthusiastic royalist and a far less reluctant traitor than was actually the case. Since their jobs depended, ultimately, on results, they had continually to give the assurance that Pichegru was about to act. The credulity of Condé and Wickham helped them, but the time came when even Condé, the more credulous of the two, began to suspect that they were making a fool of him. Fauche-Borel gave detailed accounts of meetings and conversations which probably never took place at all, and Badonville, Pichegru's secretary, whom they bought, gave a more authentic tone to the exaggerated hopes with which they fed Condé. Thirdly, it is possible, but not easy, to attribute a good deal of Pichegru's incompetence in the field during the campaign to the state of his troops and the mismanagement and corruption in Paris.

The personal characters of the agents, their lies, and the perpetual talk of money in their correspondence tempt one to think that perhaps Pichegru had, in a moment of indiscretion,



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fallen into bad company, and his defenders can say that even if he was a French Republican general who took English money from a French Prince in the service of the Austrians, he really performed very little for those who had got a hold over him. But the best that can be said for him, when all the known facts are reviewed, is that as soon as he realized what he had done, he tried to safeguard himself with both sides. He shrank from the implications of his treachery. He had to convince the Government that he was doing his best to obey their instructions, and he had to hide his intrigues from the representatives on mission ; at the same time he had to persuade Condé that he was doing all he could for him. That would explain the display of military stupidity, which satisfied neither side. After Quiberon and Vendémiaire it became more important than ever for Condé to get him to act decisively. But with the Jacobins once more firmly in power he had to play for safety. This difficult task he conducted with skill. To his honour he refused to abandon any towns. When Condé asked for Strasbourg or Huningue, or both, he replied that he was against half-measures. When he acted, he wanted to act decisively. To win over his whole army would take time, and would require a generous distribution of seditious literature. And if Condé began to suspect that Pichegru's heart was not in the business, the agents could always reassure him by calling attention to the ease with which Fauche-Borel moved among Pichegru's troops, distributing bribes of money, wine, clothing, and encouraging them to talk about their grievances, so that he could attribute all their misfortunes to the ruffians in Paris. Then there were the disasters of Heidelberg and Mayence to prove that Pichegru was not trying very hard to obey his Government's orders. From all this it is evident that, having entered into negotiations with his country's enemies, Pichegru was determined to be only half a traitor, while drawing the pay and allowances of a full traitor.

### III

By the middle of July, '95, Provence at Verona had approved of the seduction of Pichegru, and had recommended that the General should either facilitate the desertion of large bodies

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of his troops, or should "remain on the defensive with just sufficient strength to prevent the Austrians from taking our towns, until the moment when we are strong enough to defend them ourselves." One month later the intrigue was on foot. Faucheborel had met Pichegru at Huningue. Hoche's reply to overtures from a royalist agent had been to show him the door and to threaten to have him shot if he paid a second visit. Pichegru allowed himself to be tempted—but he was by no means enthusiastic, not even when a letter from Montgaillard, shortly after Faucheborel's interview, informed him of the services expected of him, and the corresponding payment. He was to proclaim Louis XVIII King of France, and to exact from his Army the oath of obedience and loyalty to the new King. The white cockade was to supplant the tricolour. Strasbourg, Huningue, and the principal towns of Alsace were to be handed over to Condé. A bridge of boats was to be constructed for Condé's passage of the Rhine. The Austrians were to remain on the right bank. Louis XVIII himself would come to Alsace and, under him, Condé would assume command of the two Armies, his own and that of Pichegru. Pichegru would be created a Marshal of France, and would command all the King's armies. He would be given the Grand Cross of St. Louis, the governorship of Alsace for life, the castle and park of Chambord, an annuity of 200,000 livres, a house in Paris, two million in cash. A medal would be struck in his honour, his native place, Arbois, would have a statue erected to him and would be exempted from all forms of taxation for ten years. He would be buried at St. Denis.

Pichegru was sufficiently interested to point out the impracticability of Condé's scheme. He had no wish, he said, to continue the story of Lafayette and Dumouriez. But the alternative plan he suggested was even more ridiculous. He would cross the Rhine, come back with Condé's troops, and the two Armies would take possession of Alsace. "We shall be in Paris in fifteen days." From that moment began the confused tangle of suggestions and discussions which achieved nothing.

Würmser, who had not been invited to take part in the conspiracy, soon began to have his suspicions. He could not believe that the General who had driven him out of Alsace in 1794 had

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suddenly become an incompetent muddler. Furthermore, the royalist agents had talked indiscreetly. Würmser and Clerfayt began to enquire into the matter. Condé became alarmed. Suppose Pichegru joined the Austrians? The result was that the Austrians were informed of what was going on—which was not at all to Pichegru's taste. When Würmser attacked again, the French troops fought magnificently, but their commander played his own game and over-reached himself. By trying to please Condé with a retreat, and the Government with a show of resistance, he lost the Palatinate, and exhausted the patience of the Government. The conspiracy had reached a deadlock. Condé could execute no military movement without the Austrians. They would not allow him to move until he could give them the Alsatian towns as a guarantee of his good faith. Pichegru refused to surrender the towns. His latest excuse for inaction was that the Government in Paris was about to be overthrown, and that the encouragement of counter-Revolutionary groups was more important than a military operation. The puzzled agents were informed that he was about to encourage fraternization between the advance-guards on either side of the Rhine, and so stimulate desertion among his troops. But the Directors were becoming suspicious. Barthélemy, in Basle, had been collecting information for a report on the situation in Alsace. This report revealed that there were royalist agents and spies at work among the French troops, and that they were being assisted by some of the higher officers. An examination of Pichegru's correspondence and changes in the high command were recommended. At the end of December Pichegru was recalled. Five days earlier Fauche-Borel had been arrested in Strasbourg, but he apparently had time to destroy incriminating papers, for he was released from prison after a week.

Just in time to save Pichegru from disgrace, the Austrians, at the end of December, asked for an armistice, so that their weary troops could go into winter quarters. The Directors found it convenient to leave Pichegru, who negotiated the armistice with Würmser, in command until hostilities should break out again, when his successor would take over from him. So the game went on. If Pichegru's object had been (and perhaps it was) to make his men more disgusted with their trade and more inclined to

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desert, he would not have acted otherwise than he did. Instead of moving them into winter quarters, he left them to endure hunger and cold and disease in the areas devastated by the recent fighting. "He profited by the armistice," said Saint-Cyr, the future Marshal, "to leave his army to perish from hunger and misery." He also profited by it to facilitate, or, at any rate, to allow the distribution of royalist literature, and to close his eyes to the desertions which took place at his advanced posts. Seeing the soldiers becoming angrier and more undisciplined the agents plucked up heart again. This time, and at last, they told themselves, Pichegru was about to give them something for their money. But again he disappointed them. It seems that the position had become too hot for him, and that he had decided to look after his future before it was too late. He knew that the Directors were dissatisfied with him and that he had almost exhausted the goodwill of Condé. And one day, while Condé was expressing delight at the disintegration of the Army of the Rhine, and thinking that, after all, the march on Paris was a possibility, news was brought to him that Pichegru had indeed marched on Paris—alone.

Possibly to forestall his recall by the Directors, possibly to see for himself the state of affairs in Paris, and to ensure a civil career for himself if his military career ended, he had applied for leave. And in March of '96, the Directors replaced him by Desaix, and he set out for the capital, well supplied with money by Demougé. The Directors had no proof of his treason, but there were too many rumours and too many reports of mysterious intrigues to be ignored, and he was soon relieved of his command. He was back again in Strasbourg in April, to make a last attempt to convince Condé of the sincerity of his treachery. But the English paymaster and the cosmopolitan spies were both in a harder frame of mind. Wickham was annoyed at getting nothing for his money, and his employees were annoyed at the prospect of their pay being stopped. By losing his Army, Pichegru had lost his authority. Yet Condé and his circle, even now, were unwilling to confess failure, for Pichegru had a new plan. But it was soon evident that this plan, which he had brought from the Constitutional Club in Paris, was directly opposed to the ideas of Condé and the Austrians. Instead of a march on Paris and a

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restoration of the Monarchy by force, there was to be a gradual transition from Republic to Monarchy, after a careful preparation of public opinion. At the right moment Pichegru himself, in response to a universal demand, would restore the Bourbon claimant to the throne. With astonishing lack of judgment, Pichegru added that, of course, the restored monarchy would be a Constitutional Monarchy with no attempt to re-establish the old régime and with a free pardon for all offenders. The effect of this on Provence and his noblemen may be imagined. By the summer of '96 even Condé had given up hope. The Emperor of Austria had ordered his Generals to remain on the defensive, Moreau and Jourdan were advancing into Germany, Bonaparte was conducting his victorious campaign in Italy. The royalists wanted to approach Moreau, but Wickham very sensibly refused to pay for any more wild schemes. Montgaillard and d'Antraigues even thought of sounding Bonaparte, but as it was not clear whose money was to be used, this suggestion petered out in wrangling. Yet the intrigue was not over. Through the summer and autumn of '96 Pichegru brooded on his scheme for preparing public opinion for the restoration of the Bourbons. But although new agents turned up, and though there was much correspondence, in which demands for money played their usual part, Condé had come to his senses, and had at last realized that Pichegru's half-promises amounted to nothing. The émigré army, which was disliked equally by Austrians and Frenchmen, passed into the pay of Russia, and the exiles set out for the Polish provinces. Pichegru returned to Paris.

### IV

The successful campaigns of the French armies, and the realization, based on Pichegru's information, that there was no chance of winning over Moreau, forced the royalists, with the exception of Condé, to abandon the idea of a march on Paris. Whatever was done must be done by political intrigue in the capital. Provence himself, in the early months of '97, was instructing his agents to pursue the new methods, and the British Government was satisfied that, though a great deal of money and effort had been

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wasted in the support of Condé's fantastic schemes, it was worth while trying again. Wickham was well-informed of the situation in Paris, and told Grenville that it was not the victories of the armies which kept the Directory in power, but the fear of something worse even than the present Government. There was in Paris a royalist agent, Dandré, who had been a member of the Constituent Assembly. This man succeeded in persuading Wickham that it would not be difficult to influence the coming elections of '97 in such a way that a royalist majority in the Councils would be able to overthrow the Directory, and so prepare the way for the restoration of the Monarchy. The money was, as usual, handed over, and once more the name of Pichegru came up. The new conspiracy seemed to be following the ideas which Pichegru had been expressing for some time, and he appeared to the sanguine Wickham to be the obvious choice for a leading part in the plot. And so the unhappy soldier found himself once more in the midst of intrigue, and once more opposed a non-committal prudence to the eager demands of those who wished to be his followers. His election to the Presidency of the Five Hundred gave him the excuse he wanted to avoid becoming involved in the bickerings and recriminations of the various shades of royalist, so that both the Constitutionalists and the party of Trémouille (Provence's Council) were soon accusing him of showing himself as hesitant and ineffective in politics as he had been in his last military campaign. As in '95 and '96, so in '97 he was afraid of the possible consequences of what he had done, and so bent all his energies to the task of safeguarding his future. He refused to come out into the daylight. And poor, gullible Wickham was soon receiving the old complaints, this time from disillusioned Dandré. Even when Pichegru's Presidency came to an end, he opposed the same apathy to all who tried to enlist his active help, and contented himself with hoping for a settlement of the dispute between the Directory and the Councils.

The three intriguing Directors knew a good deal of what was going on, but they needed, to justify the unconstitutional action they intended to take, something more than vague reports of a royalist conspiracy. Royalist conspiracy was endemic, and it was no good attacking Pichegru as the leader, since he was obviously

resolved to wait and see what happened, before declaring himself. They wanted a pretext, and luck favoured them.

On May 21st the royalist agent d'Antraigues was arrested in Trieste, on the order of Bernadotte. To save his life he announced that he had some important revelations to make to General Bonaparte. This aroused Bonaparte's curiosity, who had his papers seized. Among them was a précis of Montgaillard's account of the negotiations with Pichegru, and a reference to his intention of involving Bonaparte. D'Antraigues, once more to save his life, consented to prepare an abridged version of the document, omitting the reference to Bonaparte, which would be sent to Paris at once. And at that moment, a deputy, Fabre, arrived in Milan. Barras had sent him to ask Bonaparte if the three Directors could rely on him to support them in the coming conflict with the Councils. Fabre returned with a promise of support, and with the incriminating document. But Barras and his friends were to have another piece of good fortune. They had their pretext for Fructidor. And the moment it was over, further documents were put into their hands, which they used to justify what they had done.

When Moreau crossed the Rhine in April '97, he captured a number of Austrian wagons. One of them contained the papers of an Austrian spy named Klinglin, who had been involved in the negotiations between Condé and Pichegru. The wagon was sent to Strasbourg, where Desaix, who had been wounded, looked through the papers, and at once discovered their importance. He informed Moreau, and five officers were ordered to decipher and arrange the papers. For a reason which we do not know, when he found that the correspondence revealed Pichegru's relations with Condé, Moreau let the matter drop. After Fructidor he told the Directors that he had been unable to make up his mind whether to send them the papers or merely to announce their existence. Many years later he said in a letter to Bonaparte that the discovery was so painful that he decided to ignore it, first having taken precautions to make such things impossible in his own Army. But on the eve of Fructidor two things occurred which made Moreau change his mind. Mathieu Dumas told him that the Constitutional party was about to challenge the Directors

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to be more explicit in their accusations against certain members of the Councils, and to substantiate the rumours which they were treating as truth. At the same time Desaix, on a mission in Italy, had been told by Bonaparte of the despatch to Paris of the d'Antraigues document. He at once informed Moreau, who decided to send the captured papers of Klinglin to the Directory. Five days after Fructidor Moreau, in an address to his troops, denounced their former commander as a traitor.

### V

Weakness of character induced Pichegru to take the road on which there was no turning back. His first folly led him on to the irretrievable loss of his honour. He probably did not foresee the shame that was to come on him. It has been said that the intrigues of the politician did not tarnish the honour of the soldier. That is arrant nonsense. The intrigues of the politician involved the betrayal of the Army under the soldier's command, and if he did not allow his country's enemies to inflict a decisive defeat on him, he did nothing to defeat them. His conduct of the campaign of '95 was dictated by the demands of those who paid him for his services. And if he could not bring himself to surrender Alsatian fortresses, he found it possible to use the misery of his men to further his plans against the Government which entrusted those men to his care. He shrank from an open act of treachery on a major scale, but he performed for his paymasters every vile task which he could safely perform without jeopardizing his position as a General of the Republic. When he realized what he had done and how little he had gained, he seems to have deplored the ruin of his career more than the baseness of his actions. Six years later, after the failure of Cadoudal's royalist plot against Napoleon, Pichegru was found strangled in his prison.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The royalist Hyde de Neuville says in his memoirs that Pichegru "As a citizen was against the government, but as a General never compromised, even in thought, with his duty, military honour or patriotism." He also says: "Pichegru's plan was simply to unite himself, at the moment he should judge opportune, to the army of Condé, a completely French army . . . to direct a large part of his army on Paris . . . mixed with the army of the Princes, it would have produced a decisive and general movement of the population against the Directory."



## CHAPTER IX

### *The Conspiracy of Fructidor, 1797*

#### I

THERE was a man watching and listening in the background while the conspiracy of September 4th (18th Fructidor), 1797, was being developed. Talleyrand had long ago decided that if he was ever to make the fortune which he required to enable him to live the kind of life he enjoyed, it was time for him to emerge from the background. But only his intimate friends saw this impatience, for no man wore more gracefully the mask of weary indifference as a method of deception. But he was bored. At a time when people no more venial and far less intelligent than himself were using their positions to make money, he resented his comparative inactivity.

He had left France in September, 1792. When Paris became too dangerous for him, after the fall of the Monarchy, he decided to go into exile. He saw no future for himself in a world of demagogues. But one could be certain that he would not allow either those who might be useful to him or those who might be his enemies, to say that he was an émigré. Once before, in the January of this same year, he had found himself in a difficult position, and persuaded Lessart to entrust him with a mission to England. The cool reception accorded to him, and his failure to persuade Pitt and Grenville, against his own convictions, that the Revolution was not as violent as it seemed, did not discourage him from making another attempt. Soon after August 10th, he prepared a memorandum justifying the events which had so shocked and frightened him, and followed it up by another, embodying that idea which was all through his life the king-pin of his foreign policy—the necessity for friendship with England. He had told Lessart that English commerce and French agriculture were necessary to each other, and he was now prepared to press his policy once more, while at the same time saving his

skin. He had an interview with Danton, who also deplored the mere neutrality of England, and wanted her friendship, and he was given his passport. His mission was unofficial. In other words, he was allowed to emigrate because he could be useful. At the end of November he sent from England the famous document on the possibilities of an alliance, but all his hope of being employed in an official capacity was destroyed when the secret papers discovered in the Tuileries were found to contain two of his notes of '91, offering his services to Louis XVI. In December he was decreed an émigré. He remained in England, cold-shouldered by the Government and intriguing with the Whig opposition, until, under the Aliens Bill, he was ordered to leave the country. Eighteen months in America followed, long months of boredom, during which his recurring thought was how to get back to France. One of his old friends of Juniper Hall now had an influential voice. Mme de Staël, who with all her faults, was a loyal friend, set to work. She persuaded Marie-Joseph Chénier to draw the attention of the Convention to the injustice of leaving the illustrious Talleyrand's name on the list of émigrés, and at one of the last sessions of the Convention his name was removed. When Talleyrand heard the news, he wrote to tell his champion that for the rest of his life, wherever she happened to be, he would be beside her. It is to be hoped that she had the good sense not to believe him.

But he curbed his impatience. He wanted to see what would come of the Directory, and it was not until the middle of June, '96, nine months after the decree which allowed him to return, that he boarded a Danish ship. On the last day of July he landed at Hamburg. He went from there to Amsterdam, uncertain still whether the Directory would last, and it was not until September that he once more set foot on French soil, after four years of exile, and at once hurried to Germaine de Staël and her friends at Auteuil. Having studied the situation at close quarters, he made up his mind that Bonaparte was the coming man, and that he would be, in the phrase of Emile Dard, the impresario of the new star. But he must first of all get into office, and it must be the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "*Dans les grandes affaires,*" he had said, "*il faut faire marcher les femmes.*" He turned once

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more to Mme de Staël. She directed Benjamin Constant, another of her lovers, to start a campaign.

It was no easy matter. The difficulty was to persuade the Directors to get rid of a sound Republican, Delacroix, and to appoint a man whom most of them disliked intensely. For Carnot, he was a man who had "retained all the vices of the old régime, without acquiring a single virtue of the new." Reubell despised him as a dishonest blackguard, La Revellière had endured sneers at his favourite religion, Theophilanthropy. Talleyrand was a good actor, and could cloak the greed which had corrupted his soul, with an oily suavity. But he could never resist a wounding epigram. There remained the negligible Letourneur, and the nobleman Barras, who could give the candidate a couple of vices and beat him. Barras certainly could have no objection on moral grounds to Talleyrand, so it was upon him that Mme de Staël directed her onslaught. But the problem for Barras, now a frequenter of Mme de Staël's salon, was to make her understand how hard it would be to overcome the repugnance of his fellow-Directors. Though the two men were surely made to appreciate each other, how was the opposition to be overcome? The details of the intrigue will probably never be known. Talleyrand and Barras both left accounts of what happened, but it must be remembered that neither of them would be likely to tell the truth unless there was something to be got by that quaint habit. Talleyrand describes how, against his will, he consented to accompany Mme de Staël to dine with Barras at Suresnes, and how he so charmed the Director by his conversation, that the Ministry fell into his lap. Barras shows us himself resisting every appeal of the hysterical blue-stocking, including the offer of her person, and the announcement that Talleyrand would commit suicide if he did not get what he deserved. Anyhow, Talleyrand, who had conducted a scurrilous campaign against the ailing Delacroix, and seduced his wife, got his Ministry. The Directors protested a good deal, but nobody could deny his ability or his knowledge of the world.

Boniface de Castellane, Talleyrand's friend, relates that as he drove to the Luxembourg to thank Barras, he repeated over and over again, in a sort of frenzy, "We've got the job! We must

make an enormous fortune out of it, an enormous fortune!"<sup>1</sup> This, too, is probably a lie, though it certainly represented his inmost thoughts. It is unlikely that such an experienced actor would have suddenly forgotten his part. Possibly Constant, who told the story to Mme de Staël, and was in the carriage, was reading Talleyrand's thoughts. In an unguarded moment Talleyrand may have revealed, if only by an ecstatic look, that the longing to serve his country, upon which Mme de Staël had laid such loud emphasis, was tempered by less praiseworthy longings. "*Je l'aime*," said the witty Mme de Hamelin, "*Parce qu'il n'est pas infiniment scrupuleux*."

Talleyrand had got his Ministry, and lost no time in establishing a correspondence with Bonaparte. On July 18th he went to the rue du Bac to supersede the unhappy Delacroix. On July 24th he announced his appointment to Bonaparte in a modest, sycophantic and exceedingly crafty letter. He did not say in so many words that he hoped he and Bonaparte would be able to work together, without paying too much attention to anybody else. In fact he spoke, quite correctly, of "forwarding the views of the Directory," and so forth. But it is clear from Bonaparte's reply from Milan, on April 5th, that he had read between the lines, had understood what was in Talleyrand's mind, and was prepared to "correspond regularly" with him.

As the September crisis approached Talleyrand proved a useful agent for Bonaparte in Paris. They corresponded secretly as well as officially. They had in common contempt for the Directors, hatred of the Jacobins and a determination to keep the Bourbons out. Talleyrand had to submit to the snubs of the Directors, but he saw that he must pretend to work with them, in order to prepare the way for Bonaparte, and, in so doing, lay the foundations of a profitable career for himself. He or his agents knew everybody whom it was important to know, and he had found the work which suited him so well. Moving about quietly, he dropped a word here and a phrase there, all the while keeping the absent General informed of the state of affairs in Paris. Lavallette was there also, at the same work, and had been warned not to get himself involved with any faction.

<sup>1</sup> Decès said, "No wonder he's rich. He sells everyone who buys him."

## II

Bonaparte was not in a hurry. By now he knew his own capacities. In the gardens at Montebello he had seen his destiny and had let fall in conversation some of his thoughts. He had now proved to himself that he could govern men, and he had no intention of making more than a flying visit now and then to Paris, until he could return to answer the loud demand of the people for a man who could be trusted to restore order and good government to France. What he clearly foresaw was that events were conspiring to make him indispensable. There would be no need for him to ask for power. When the right moment came there would be no possible alternative to him. But at present—" *La poire n'est pas mûre.*"

He decided to act, but not in person. He had once already saved the skins of the Jacobins by firing on the people. If he was to take power, it should be by legal means, constitutionally, and not by force like the leader of any faction. All the same he was willing once again to take the side of men for whom he had no respect in what he regarded as a political squabble. He himself had been attacked in the royalist Club de Clichy and in several newspapers. But what affected him more was his certainty that, if the country did not want the Directory, they were no more anxious for the Bourbons. The time was not ripe for the stroke which would unite all the factions, and, in the phrase of Boulay de la Meurthe, nationalize the revolution. The Army, for the most part, regarded the Government with contempt, but it was sincerely attached to the principles of the Revolution and was violently anti-clerical. When Bonaparte, on July 24th, spoke in his proclamation to the Army of Italy, of "implacable war on the enemies of the Republic and the Constitution"; when he wrote to the Directors, bidding them "arrest the émigrés," and talking of the destruction of the Republic being prepared by the Club de Clichy—in both cases he was speaking for his soldiers. He knew well enough what was toward. He even knew what part the Catholic revival had played in the crisis, since General Clarke, arriving in Italy from Paris, had told him :

"The revolution has failed, as far as religion is concerned. The people have become Catholics again, and possibly we've reached the stage when we shall need the Pope himself to get the priests to support the Revolution, and, through the priests, the country people of whom these priests are again in charge."

It was not, however, to Bonaparte that Barras addressed himself. Bonaparte was judged too popular, too brilliant and therefore too dangerous. Moreau was considered, but, off the battlefield, he had no initiative, and some suspected him of royalism. Hoche was the final choice; a firm Republican, a magnificent soldier, and a man of the finest character. He was twenty-eight years of age, full of ardour, honest and loyal. Barras had undertaken no easy task. First, he had to overcome the repugnance of Reubell and La Revellière to the use of armed force. Next he had to find an excuse for troops to cross the boundary line outside Paris, beyond which they were forbidden to come. But his most difficult task of all would be to convince Lazare Hoche that he was saving the Republic in its extremity of peril, by protecting the present Government. Hoche had no illusions about the Directory, but Barras was able to persuade him that a Monarchist coup was imminent.

### III

In Hoche there was nothing of the conspirator or the politician. He was straightforward, generous, impulsive—and therefore an easy prey. His jealousy of Bonaparte has been both exaggerated and misinterpreted. It was not the cold jealousy of a competitor for supreme power, but the hot rivalry of one successful soldier with another. Wolfe Tone heard him criticize Bonaparte vigorously, and noted in his diary, "A very great jealousy of Bonaparte," but in such an outburst from a young man of twenty-eight, who is too honest to be discreet, there is nothing sinister. It seems that La Revellière and Reubell left the negotiations to Barras, content to take credit for a success, and, in case of failure, to saddle Barras with the entire responsibility for the plot. Hoche received orders to detach from his army ten thousand men for the

invasion of Ireland. They were to proceed to Brest, but on the way there, fresh orders arrived. They were to march towards Paris. Some of the soldiers thought they were going to take part in a procession to celebrate peace, others said the Government was in danger from the factions. Hoche, eager to save the Republic, pressed on ahead of them. Meanwhile, in Paris, Hoche, though under the required age, had been made Minister of War, and this fact, coupled with rumours of a body of troops advancing on the capital, disturbed many of the deputies. Pétiet, who was still acting as Minister of War, since Hoche had not arrived, announced that troops of Hoche's command were certainly marching towards Paris. Such a confession from the Minister of War, followed by the admission that he knew nothing of the matter, was not guaranteed to allay suspicion. Carnot, closely questioned, in the greatest perplexity, denied all knowledge of what was going on, and he spoke the truth. He said that Hoche had acted without orders, that all he had been told to do was to assemble troops at Brest for the Irish expedition, and that the Directors would at once issue a further order to Hoche to take his men back to Brest. But Barras, when questioned, said that the troop-movement was due to the error of some official. At once a storm broke in the Councils. Pichegru talked of investing the Luxembourg. Lacuée wanted Barras arrested.

Hoche, leaving his men outside the prescribed limits, came into Paris, suspecting little of the state of affairs. "Unless we strike a strong blow," he said to Marbot, father of the chronicler of the Napoleonic Wars, "Louis the Eighteenth may be on the throne before fifteen days are up." He added that he "counted on the three faithful Directors." Carnot, meanwhile, had been to see Barras, who, of course, could not imagine what all the trouble was about. On July 21st Hoche went to the Luxembourg and within a few minutes the enormity of his blunder was becoming clear to him. Carnot, acting in good faith, bluntly accused him of conspiring against the Republic, and was supported by Barthélemy. Hoche, of course, turned to the "three faithful Directors." They would, at any rate, clear his name. Reubell, silent hitherto, said he knew nothing of the matter. La Revellière feigned an

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equal ignorance. Carnot, more confident than before that Hoche was the villain of the affair, redoubled his questions. Ill at ease, Hoche looked at Barras. But Barras was busy with a piece of paper which lay before him. The young general, growing more and more uncomfortable and angry, spoke of an order misunderstood. He was determined to shield Barras, but Carnot knew enough of men to know that, even if Hoche's story was a lie, the general was certainly not acting on his own initiative. And he seized the "misunderstood order" as a chance of settling the dispute at once. Hoche resigned from the Ministry of War, and then waited for a few days to see if he could still be of service, if Barras decided to use him. But the Directors continued their personal quarrels, hoping that Pichegru would take the offensive and thus relieve them of the responsibility of beginning the contest. Hoche now saw that he had compromised himself for nothing, and had lost a great deal of his popularity. Embittered and broken in health, he left Paris for the Army of Sambre-et-Meuse. At the beginning of September, Wolfe Tone saw him at Wetzlar and was shocked at the change in him. He died on September 19th. The sordid end to his brilliant career must count as one more crime of the three Directors. Hoche's straightforwardness made him an easy dupe. He had honestly thought that he was called to Paris to save the Republic, not for the contemptible intrigue which was to keep the three Directors in power. There is no doubt that he was prepared to assume a temporary military dictatorship if necessary. He said, "I will break the counter-Revolution, and when I have saved my country, I will break my sword." It was no thought of personal power that induced him to answer the summons of Barras.

### IV

Lavallette had been empowered by Bonaparte to offer aid in solving the problem, if there appeared to be a stalemate. The emissary, watching the hesitations of Barras and the growing irritation of Pichegru, judged that the moment had come to take a hand. He knew that the troops outside Paris were not



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getting their pay, because there was no money to pay them with. He, therefore, told Barras that Bonaparte was willing to help the Directors—not least in the matter of money, with which, thanks to the plunder of Italy, he was better supplied than Hoche. Barras accepted the offer with enthusiasm.

The moment the first plan of Barras had broken down and he had, in his characteristic fashion, ruined the career of Hoche, Bonaparte in Italy began to stir up his armies against the royalists. He encouraged his generals to compose those addresses of loyalty to the Directory which I have described. Bonaparte's act in forwarding to the Directory a dozen of these addresses was to signify his approval of the threats contained in them. There was also a covering letter from Bonaparte himself, in which the most significant sentence was: "*Si vous avez besoin de force, appelez les armées.*" This was translated by Barras as an offer to come in person to Paris to direct the operation. At the same time the Army of the Rhine also sent addresses. At a banquet an officer gave the toast, "*A Bonaparte! Puisse-t-il! . . .*" Hoche, who was present at the banquet, had cut him short with the words: "*A Bonaparte tout court, son nom dit tout.*" The *Moniteur* published the addresses but they did not appear to have the intimidating effect which had been expected, and once more each party waited for the other to make a rash move.

It was the moment for Bonaparte to intervene—from a distance. He sent the papers containing the proof of Pichegru's treachery to the Directory.

## V

Barras and Reubell and La Revellière were now in complete agreement. But Carnot, to his honour, fought them to the end. He protested strongly against the addresses from the Armies, and attacked Bonaparte by name. The royalists, who were as hesitant as the Directory, got no sympathy from him. For his protests were not a matter of taking sides. They were an appeal for law and order. At the end of July, then, both parties knew that an explosion was coming, and both knew the importance of moving first. But Barras was awaiting Bonaparte. Apparently

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he now expected him in person, failing to read his character. Bonaparte knew how to wait, and, having done one dirty job for Barras, he did not intend to have his name connected with a second. So he detached a body of troops under Augereau, who reached Paris on August 7th, where, as Bonaparte wrote to the Directors, "he has business to attend to."

For such work there can have been no better man than this truculent swordsman, son of a mason of the St. Marceau quarter of Paris. He was a large, violent man, a good soldier, a staunch Jacobin, and noted for his oaths and his direct speech. With characteristic frankness, he announced on his arrival from Italy: "I have come to kill the royalists." His presence brought no great comfort to either side; except that nobody could accuse him of having any political ambitions. He had not been in Paris long before numbers of Jacobin officers, mostly discharged from the Army, began to filter into the capital and to stir up trouble. Pichegru did nothing to rally the royalists and, when the two Chambers started a recruiting campaign for the National Guard, they found that nobody was anxious to enrol. Carnot alone continued to protest against the growing disorder and to demand the withdrawal from Paris of the Jacobin officers—without effect. The three Directors were now quite sure of themselves. They had Augereau and his troops to hand. They had agents spreading reports that the royalists intended to call in the Bourbons and re-establish the old régime. And if Pichegru or any friend of his moved a finger, they had the damning evidence of treachery to publish.

By the end of August the Councils knew the plan of the three Directors, and there was still time to take measures to forestall it. It was decided that a report should be drawn up, by Vaublanc, informing the deputies of what was about to happen. But the moderate men feared civil war, and so the report was postponed for a few days. The three Directors, who had their sources of information, at last decided that they would strike before the hesitating Councils had come to any decision. Augereau received his final instructions and, in the darkness of the night of September 3rd, his troops marched to their stations in the neighbourhood of the Tuileries.

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Barras had tried unsuccessfully to persuade Barthélemy to resign. Barthélemy, puzzled, came to Carnot, who told him what was brewing. In conversation Carnot affected to make light of the conspiracy, saying, to those who counselled him not to return to the Luxembourg on the night of the 3rd, that the Guard of the Directory was protection enough. Nevertheless, he had sent his wife and child out of Paris, and had had a special key made, which would open a certain gate in the gardens. On returning from a ride on the evening of the 3rd, he tried this key himself. A picket was posted within call, and his brother and his secretary took it in turn to watch in the room next to his bedroom. His precautions taken, Carnot sat down to his work, and at one o'clock in the morning went to bed in his clothes. An officer of the Guard, a German named Hiller, had noticed that there were troops outside in the garden, and he now came for orders. Carnot told him to turn them out. After an hour he returned to say that a number of officers on half-pay had gathered under the windows of Barras, and had refused to go away, saying that Barras had invited them. Hiller had, of course, gone to Barras to verify this unlikely story, and Barras had, of course, verified it. He confided to Hiller that he had got wind of a rumour of an attack on the Luxembourg on that very night, and that he was determined to take precautions for its defence. The practised liar told his story well, we may be sure, and when it was over Hiller and his comrades were invited to take some refreshment. Barras then apparently switched to the truth. At any rate, two hours later, Hiller came back to Carnot's apartment with a squad of men, posted sentries at the doors, and told Feulins, Carnot's brother, that, much to his regret, it was his duty to arrest the Director. "Proceed with your duty," said Feulins. "I presume you do not imagine that I'm going to hand over my brother to you." Allent the secretary, at a sign from Feulins, offered to conduct Hiller and his men to the Director, and while he was leading them to the wrong room, Feulins ran to wake his brother. They left the apartment by a concealed staircase, crossed the small garden at the back of the rooms, and reached the postern-gate, only to discover that they had forgotten the key. Feulins dashed back and, although Hiller and his men were still following

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Allent from room to room, he found the key in a drawer and hastened back to the garden—to find that his brother had vanished. He discovered him soon after, trying to scale a wall, and they made their escape together through the gate. Feulins had locked several doors before leaving with the key. Hiller informed Barras, and General Chérin arrived with reinforcements. The doors were broken down, and in one of the rooms they found Carnot's bed, still warm. Barras in a rage hurled a writing-desk at one of the mirrors. Meanwhile the soldiers killed a man they found in the garden, hoping it might be Carnot. Wishing to entice Carnot from his hiding-place, the three Directors announced that he need not have fled. They merely wanted to secure his person to avoid a conflict. He had only to come back to the Luxembourg to be welcomed as their old colleague. But Carnot, who hid in Paris for a week, was not fool enough to walk into the trap—and soon heard that he had been condemned to deportation. Barthélemy was caught in his bed.

Meanwhile, the troops of Augereau, under Generals on whom he could rely—Verdière, Dommartin, Guillot—were preparing to block the streets by which the deputies could have escaped. In the hall used by the Inspectors of the Councils, the Pavillon de Marsan, some fifteen deputies were trying to decide what measures of defence they should take. Among them was Pichegru, for whose failure to escape in time there are two explanations. He may have despaired, on being told by Thibaudeau that the tale of his treason was already on the placards of Paris ; or he may have been encouraged to think himself safe for the moment by a messenger who is said to have been sent to him that night by Barras. At all events, here, where the handful had gathered, was the headquarters of the resistance. To protect themselves they relied on the two battalions of the bodyguard of the Councils, twelve hundred grenadiers under Ramel, who had served with Moreau's Army of the Rhine. Many of them had belonged to the old bodyguard of the Convention, and were violent Jacobins, which explains what followed. Some days ago Ramel had been warned to expect trouble and had taken his precautions. But he noticed, on the night of the 3rd, that many of the deputies refused to believe that the Directors would dare

to attack them. At one in the morning of the 4th he came to the Pavillon de Marsan, where Rovère was sitting up, and told him that one of his officers had withdrawn a picket and two guns, on the orders of Augereau. Rovère told him that there was no significance in this and said that any unusual movement of troops was due to manœuvres which would take place next day. Pichegru, in his Journal, says that these orders for manœuvres were a pretext, and Rovère cannot have been simple enough to believe the story. At three in the morning Ramel received a message ordering him to withdraw his men from the Pont-Tournant, and to give passage to a body of fifteen hundred troops who would be carrying out the Government's orders. Ramel replied that he took orders only from the Councils. At that moment came the signal for Augereau to act—a gun fired by command of Barras. Ramel called his men to arms, and sent orders to the various posts to stand firm. He then went to the Tuileries, to consult Pichegru and his companions. In a short time Verdière, having overcome the posts, had invested the Tuileries and closed all the ways of escape. Ramel was urging the deputies to let him use the grenadiers, when an aide-de-camp of Verdière presented himself with fifty men and demanded the surrender of all those present, and the keys of the Tuileries. He was told that nobody there would take orders from him. So, leaving his men as a guard, he retired for further orders. He returned with Verdière and a group of officers. Ramel had rejoined his grenadiers, and messages sent to him brought no answer. The soldiers prepared to use force. Pichegru, a man of immense strength, showed fight for a moment or two. Bourdon de l'Oise was told that they had no business with him but, taking this as an insult, he emulated Le Bas and Augustin Robespierre on the 9th Thermidor, and insisted on being arrested with his friends. They were dragged out of the building, hustled into carriages, and driven to the Temple, where they arrived at seven in the morning.

Ramel had made every effort to lead his grenadiers to the rescue, but Jacobin agents had been busy among them and they went over to Augereau, who sent word to their commander to come to the Quai d'Orsay for further orders. Ramel refused.

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And then Augereau himself appeared, surrounded by his staff. According to Barras, Augereau had drunk some champagne "to prepare himself," and, on seeing Ramel, tore the officer's epaulettes from his shoulders and slashed his face with them. At any rate, he promised that he should be shot, and a group of officers broke his arm and tore his clothes, before handing him over to a guard. While this was going on, some of the deputies began to arrive, and were at once arrested. They noticed, grouped round Augereau, some of the most unpleasant survivors of the old days: Santerre, the brewer of St. Antoine, who had ordered the roll of drums which drowned the last words of Louis XVI, and Pache, the apologist of the September massacres, and the signatory of the minutes of the Queen's trial.

The military operation was soon over. More deputies were rounded up and taken to the Temple, among them two regicides who, accused of being royalists, found themselves in the cell which Louis XVI had occupied. It was now a question of political measures to seat the Jacobins once more firmly in power, until the next crisis should threaten them.

The remnants of the two Councils met that same morning, September 4th, the Ancients in the Ecole de Médecine, the Five Hundred in the rue de l'Odéon. They were left in no doubt of what the triumphant Directors intended them to do, for a proclamation had already been posted up, saying that royalists who had attacked the Directory must be punished. All those deputies who had been arrested were to be considered the accomplices of Pichegru, and the publication of the dossier of d'Antraigues, and of further revelations, was to be sufficient evidence to condemn them all without trial. In the opinion of the successful conspirators, to give the arrested deputies or the two Directors a fair trial would be a sign of weakness. In the Five Hundred, Boulay de la Meurthe pressed for the immediate deportation of the prisoners, explaining that this was no moment for the slow and careful processes of justice but rather for decisive action to consolidate the victory. Honest Republicans, listing to language which recalled the days of the Revolutionary Tribunal, held out as long as they could, but the atmosphere in which the debate took place, and the scenes which they had witnessed, reminded

them that Augereau was the master and would have the last word however long they hesitated. "*La loi, c'est le sabre !*" an officer had cried outside the Tuileries during the attack. And the intimidated remnant knew that this was the truth. By midnight of September 4th the law of proscription had been voted. The deputies had delivered their colleagues to the triumphant Directors.

The Ancients, in their turn, were forced to yield. But they showed more resistance, and held out rather longer. They sent to the Luxembourg for more ample information and for more conclusive evidence against the comrades they were being ordered to betray. But the Directors and their loudest supporters sneered at the scruples which were delaying the completion of their plans. Finally, on the morning of September 5th, the vote was taken. Many had the courage to abstain. The result was 15 to 7 in favour of proscription, figures which are more eloquent than the boast of La Revellière-Lépeaux that the crowds shouted in the streets "*Vive La Revellière-Lépeaux !*" The first list of the proscribed was a mixture of royalists and republicans. It included, among the seventeen, the two Directors Carnot and Barthélemy ; Pichegru ; Mathieu Dumas, who had refused to act against Barras and Reubell two days before ; young Camille Jordan, whose report on the revision of the penal laws against the Catholics had so infuriated and alarmed the Jacobins ; Marbois, Siméon, Tronson du Coudray, Portalis. The seventeen were sent to Rochefort in iron cages, with every circumstance of brutality. From there they were shipped to Guiana, where the terrible climate killed several of them. In the days that followed military commissions sentenced many more to deportation or to death. During this brief revival of the Terror, the people showed little sign either of enthusiasm or hostility.<sup>1</sup>

On this September 5th a number of decrees were forced through by the more energetic members of the Councils. The May elections were annulled, and the administrative bodies in the departments dismissed. The relatives of émigrés were disfranchized and the laws against the émigrés themselves, and those against refractory priests, were reimposed. Every elector and

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Staël said that between Fructidor and Brumaire there was nothing Republican in France but a few imported Roman statues.

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every priest had to swear on oath his hatred of Monarchy, on pain of deportation. The press was muzzled. The three Dictators might flatter themselves that their victory was complete. They had won another lease of power, but in their hour of success they forgot to study the implications of a victory that had been won not by them but by the Army. Augereau was reporting to Bonaparte the accomplishment of his mission, as any general reports the outcome of an operation to his commander. Bernadotte was talking of suppressing by force any show of discontent within range of his command. Bonaparte himself informed the Directors that he had sent troops to Lyons, where there were signs of disturbance, to enforce respect for the latest decrees of the intimidated Councils. In their delight at finding themselves with the Army behind them, Barras and his supporters failed to realize that, by making a mockery of the Constitution, of democratic Government, and of Justice, they had sold the future to that successful soldier whose dim figure had haunted the imagination of Robespierre and Saint-Just. They forgot their Rousseau : "The strongest is never strong enough to remain the master unless he transforms his strength into a right, and obedience into a duty. . . . To yield to force is an act of necessity, not an act of the will. At most it is an act of prudence. And how can that be a duty ? . . . As soon as you admit that might is right, the effect changes with the cause. Any strong man who overcomes his predecessor succeeds to his right. As soon as you can disobey with impunity, you can legitimately disobey ; and if the strongest has right on his side, all a man has to do is to become the strongest." What guarantee had Barras and his friends that their own doctrine would not be used against them ? And how could they complain if somebody else violated the Constitution ? If Barras did not realize what had really happened, Bonaparte did. Barras had justified Brumaire.

## VI

There is no need to imagine that Bonaparte's conduct in face of Fructidor was anything but cynical. The men who had won



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were of a type which he despised all his life, weak tyrants without principles, uncreative, debased. Among the losers was Carnot, whose courage, integrity, and military qualities he could admire. As in Vendémiaire he had no respect for those whom he served. But in supporting the Directory he was hastening its end, and so bringing nearer his opportunity to put his own plans into execution. The hour was approaching when the people would summon him, not knowing that he had prepared himself patiently to give them good government on his own terms, and something more which they would demand above all else—peace. What he could not foresee was that the fatal legacy of the unending war would ruin his work, and that, with the exception of the four amazing years, there would be no peace until he had vanished into exile.

## CHAPTER X

### *Bonaparte Returns to Paris, and embarks for Egypt*

#### I

THE conspirators of Fructidor had to pay for their brief revival of the Terror. They had secured for themselves and their dependents a new lease of power, but only by calling up from the depths the old Jacobin extremists, who had not been fortunate enough to enjoy three years of office with all the accompanying chances for enrichment. The Directors had shouted so loudly against their opponents, and had so exaggerated the peril of a Bourbon restoration, that men who saw the Revolution swinging back towards the Terror promised themselves renewed employment. Some of them could demand payment for services rendered in connection with the preparation of Fructidor. Others remained a clamorous opposition, reminding the victors that they were still walking, delicately balanced, between their two sets of enemies. They had only to defeat one group for the other group to become a menace.

Carnot the Republican and Barthélemy the Royalist were replaced at the Directory by two Jacobins of the old school: the able lawyer Merlin, and the writer François de Neufchâteau, the latter obviously chosen for his hatred of the Catholic religion. And out of obscurity came Fouché, who had had the sense to keep in touch with Barras during the difficult years, and, through Barras, with rich bankers like Ouvrard and Collot and Hainguerlot. He was at first given no official employment, but he no doubt made himself useful to Barras in that police work which was his passion, and in which he was without rival. And later on Barras appointed him chief of the Legation in Milan. But the Government was not to be allowed to enjoy its victory for long. It had barely time to put through a measure for the reduction of the public debt by two-thirds, thus completely ruining the *rentier*, before it was in trouble again. The extremists in the two Chambers

began to accuse the Directors of corruption on a gigantic scale, of being in the pay of the financiers, and of increasing the misery of the country. All this was the natural and time-honoured appeal to the people of the men who wanted power ; and in the days when there were always a few thousand ready to march, their words might have provoked an insurrection. But by now the people were weary of the whole crew, politicians of every shade and their hangers-on. Their sufferings were intense, through the complete breakdown of government, but they were not in a frame of mind to place any hope in the promises of the agitators and journalists. They wanted two things, freedom to practise their religion, and peace, which meant work and family life again. The Directors knew that the country wanted peace, but peace to them meant the return of the Armies and the Generals. It meant, above all, the return of Bonaparte. And that was not in their plans. But Bonaparte also knew that the people wanted peace, and he intended to give it to them. The Directors were dragged two ways. Peace might give them a little reflected popularity, of which they were in dire need. It might rally support to them against the new Jacobin uproar. But it might also mean the end of their power. " We should be lost if peace were made," Sieyès had said, expressing the opinion of a party. And they had decided that peace should not be made. They had broken off the negotiations with England at Lille. They had broken off the negotiations with the Czar Paul in Berlin. They would follow this precedent now with the Austrians, by making impossible demands. They would refuse to implement Leoben. They would claim Belgium, the Rhine, Italy, *and* Venice.

They sent their instructions to Bonaparte, who at once, as usual, offered his resignation, thus confronting the Directors once more with the prospect of explaining to the people of France why their rulers had quarrelled with and accepted the resignation of the General who offered them peace. They at once climbed down, in a cringing letter. But they tried again. Again Bonaparte spoke of resigning. The next orders sent to him were to break off the negotiations and attack the Austrians. At midnight on the 17th of October, 1797, in the little village of Campo-Formio, between Udine and Passariano, the Treaty was signed. France got Belgium,

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Lombardy, and the additions which made up the Cisalpine Republic, and most of the left bank of the Rhine. Venice was left to Austria.

On the night of October 26th the Directors received a copy of the treaty which had been concluded and signed against their orders. It was an interesting moment. For it forced the Directors to face the reality of their situation. They now had to admit, among themselves, that they had a chance to break a rebellious General, if they dared to take it ; and, in the next breath, that they dared not take it. They knew that they represented nobody but their own faction, and they now saw clearly the trap into which Fructidor had led them. Bonaparte had sent one of his officers to answer their appeal. Military force had saved them. The dangerous precedent of Vendémiaire had been followed up. What was the use of appealing to the Constitution, when they themselves were always prepared to violate it where their own interests were concerned ? The man who had twice taken illegal action to keep their faction in power could not now be lectured self-righteously, especially as, with the publication of the news of Campo-Formio, he would have the whole country behind him. These miserable wretches therefore judged it wise to put a brave face on it and to ratify the treaty with a smile. But that was not enough. They had also to appear to share the wild enthusiasm of the people. For no sooner was the news known than the despondency of the masses disappeared. The tale of victories, all the great names of the Italian campaign, had touched their pride, and had given them hope, but they looked for the final victory that would bring them peace, and they believed that only Bonaparte could win it. And he had now justified their expectations. That is why they rushed into the streets of Paris, and demonstrated all over France. It required no imagination to guess what the state of the nation's mind would be if the conqueror returned to Paris. So they tried to keep him away. They appointed him their plenipotentiary at Rastadt, where the representatives of the German States were to ratify those articles of the treaty which affected them. They suggested to him that, while in Italy, he should study conditions in Turkey. And, in case he should return, they gave him the task of preparing the invasion of England.

## II

A month passed, five weeks, before, after a triumphal progress across Europe, he drove into Paris in the darkness of a December evening, and alighted in the rue Chantereine—soon to be called, in compliment to him, the rue de la Victoire. The next day the news was all over Paris.

He brought with him more than his renown, more than victory and peace. To all but a few he was almost unknown, a stranger. And this touch of mystery added to the general emotion. He was still only a youngster of twenty-eight, and this, too, made him the more remarkable. There were a hundred stories of what he looked like, of things he had said, of his courage in battle, of his skill in negotiation, and for the people of Paris the legend had preceded the man. Mixed with the mood of exaltation there was sheer curiosity—a curiosity which, in his wisdom, he baulked by every means in his power. By withholding himself, by standing aside, he became in time the hope of every faction, with the result which he intended. All claimed him, and thus made easier his subsequent task of fusing the parties into a nation. For he had made up his mind by this time that he was going to rule France. The only question was how long he must wait for his moment, since he intended to assume power in answer to the desire of the nation, not to seize it and impose himself by reliance on a party. He would work patiently, leaving it to the people to say that misrule had become unbearable. What this visit to Paris told him was that the hour had not yet come for him to do what he had planned.

For nearly a week nobody but Talleyrand and the Directors saw him. Then the official welcome of the Government was announced, and all Paris was in the streets to see him go by on his way to the Luxembourg. The fact that the hero was, physically, a completely unheroic figure seems to have increased his prestige, by making his exploits all the more amazing. For the victor of Lodi was seen to be a puny, sickly undersized young man, with a shabby air about him, narrow-chested, his hair dishevelled; grave as an overworked student; tired, melancholy. He received the

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acclamations with dignity, and the formal flatteries without emotion. His fine dark eyes appeared lifeless, and nobody saw the smile which could so transform his face and win over his enemies. With exemplary seriousness he submitted to the semi-religious ceremonial which lingered from the early days of the Revolution, and accepted with impassibility the accolade from each of the five Directors in turn. He returned thanks—another test for his admirers. For he spoke his sentences badly, in a strong Corsican accent, and in a harsh, unmusical voice.

Mme de Staël, looking back on her past life, has left us more than one vivid picture of Bonaparte as he appeared at this time. In her posthumously published *Considérations sur les Principaux Evénements de la Révolution Française* she describes her first meeting with him, and how she was struck dumb—no mean tribute to the powers of the young General. Having recovered her speech, she began to feel a curious fear, which returned on all the subsequent occasions when she met him. She says that the words with which people's characters are customarily described are useless for the description of this man's character. All his qualities appeared to be either subhuman or superhuman. *C'était plus ou moins qu'un homme*. One day, sitting between him and Sieyès at a dinner, she set herself to study his face. But the moment he became aware of this manœuvre he abstracted all expression from his eyes, and they became still and lifeless. He would not allow this intelligent woman to read his thoughts. She observes that when he is at his ease in any society, he becomes vulgar. The disdain which he assumes when he is ill at ease suits him better. She also notes a habit—already—of questioning people as Kings and Queens question them—brief, personal enquiries which somehow seem to establish his superiority over the person he is questioning.

In the days that followed Paris was preparing to throw itself at his feet, but was never given the chance. His modesty disappointed the people, but it disarmed his enemies. They had to confess that, far from abusing his popularity, he seemed to be unaware of it. It was the people who took the initiative and tried to make an idol of him. It was he who refused to be an idol. While the poets were celebrating his exploits and the administrative

authorities were sending deputations and presenting addresses, he lived quietly in his house. When he went to the theatre, he sat at the back of his box, behind Josephine. As soon as it was known that he was in the house, there were loud demands for him to show himself. He never acceded to them. He had decided on a policy, and he was carrying it out. Nor did he take the wilder demonstrations very seriously. All his life he had a contempt for the levity of the Parisians, who must have something to get excited about. "They'd be just as eager to crowd round me," he said, "if I was going to the scaffold." The thing that really gave him pleasure during this stay in Paris was his election to the Institute, and he knew how to address the distinguished and learned men who had made him their colleague. . . . "True conquests, the only conquests which leave no regret, are those made over ignorance."

At this time Talleyrand gave one of his sumptuous banquets at the Hotel Galiffet, where the great rooms were decorated as though for a theatrical performance. Bonaparte could not have absented himself on such an occasion, but the guests crowded round him like a mob in the street, and it was while he was talking to Arnault that Mme de Staël forced herself on him to ask her famous question: "General, whom do you consider the greatest woman?" The answer, "She who has most children," explains his profound admiration for Mme Campan, who, when he asked her what must be done to improve the education of girls, replied: "*Il faut faire des mères.*"

In the rue de la Victoire he now began to receive the new friends which his election to the Institute made for him. Writers and artists, composers and scientists called on him, and for the first time he was able to form an opinion of the intellectuals, the men of moderate views in politics, who were to be his support in the days of Brumaire. It was noticed that even at the Institute, as elsewhere, he seemed indifferent to praise. When he rose from his seat, between Monge and Berthollet, to read a paper or to join in a discussion, he was loudly applauded. But his bearing was that of a savant who is merely taking part in his customary work. And when the meetings broke up, nobody knew better than he how to flatter these men by questioning them on their

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own subjects. And all the time he was observing them and reading their minds—and sometimes encouraging Daunou or Chénier or another to talk politics. He was even gracious and humble in the presence of Sieyès. At this time, intriguers who wished to capture him for their faction began to try to sound him. It was his chance to rehearse the preliminaries of Brumaire. Now, as then, every party, from the extreme royalists to the extreme Jacobins, strove to find out what was going on in his mind, what projects this calm and non-committal attitude covered. He received them all courteously, and even returned their visits, but he told none of them what they wanted to know. The loudest-mouthed flatterers, who might have compromised him, were as puzzled as the rest. He kept his counsel, studied his maps, and appeared before the world as a brilliant soldier whose sole ambition was to wait quietly until the Government appointed him to another command.

Two matters occupied his time. The first was an intensive study of the possibilities of the invasion of England. It was an extremely popular idea with the people, but it did not take Bonaparte long to realize that, without the mastery of the sea, the enterprise had no hope of success. When he had made a tour of the ports to inspect the preparations, this opinion was confirmed, and he realized that the Directors themselves regarded the whole affair as something to keep him occupied. The second matter which he was considering was the possibility of becoming a Director. An intrigue, in which he took as little part as he could, was on foot to bring this about, and, since he was by many years below the age required, it was suggested that an exception might be made in his case. But the Directors would have none of him. This failure to enter the Government, which he would have dominated at once, made him review his situation. He knew now that the Directors were growing more hostile to him, and suspected that their plan of invasion was merely a scheme to get rid of him by involving him in a defeat. At the same time, he noticed that the people were growing impatient. They would have applauded him if he had seized power, but they were unwilling to show any activity themselves. The excitement of his return was beginning to wear away. If he overstayed his welcome, he might lose his



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popularity. He said later to Arnault, who told him that the people wanted him to kick out the Government: "If I called for my horse, nobody would follow me." The refrain was still *La poire n'est pas mûre*.

### III

Of all the men Bonaparte had talked with in Paris, one was to be of the utmost importance in the story of Brumaire, and on his name it is necessary to pause for a moment.

Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès had celebrated his fiftieth birthday two weeks before Bonaparte sailed for Egypt. His was one of the few widely known names which remained from the first days of the Revolution, when he won the reputation for wisdom which he never entirely lost. His career is the more remarkable because it was a series of failures, but no single failure was ever regarded by his admirers as final. It was always from him that was expected the Constitution which would endure, and even in 1789 he was, to most people, an enigma, because of the disdainful manner in which he offered the fruits of his studies. He rarely troubled to press his ideas. His method was something like this: "Here is what I think. You, of course, will not understand the profundity of my suggestions, and it is really hardly worth my while to elaborate them. If they interest you, use them. But I doubt very much whether they can possibly interest you. I am not going to explain myself any further. It would be waste of time." This complete disillusionment had made him cold and aloof. He never cared to conceal his contempt for most of those who surrounded him and, as his disappointments succeeded one another, he kept his chagrin to himself, or shared it with an occasional friend. To his colleagues he showed only his disgust with the human race. Yet he always had about him people who flattered him and were ready to do him kindnesses. His advice was sought over and over again, and he would give it in formula after formula. In the early days he was, like nearly everybody else, a Monarchist, but he had no respect for tradition. It was he who suggested changing the old territorial divisions of France, and he favoured the introduction of divorce. In 1789 the Constitution

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which he was preparing provided for a King with limited powers ; representative government, with triennial elections in place of an Assembly convoked by the King. And representative government remained the basis of all his theories. His carefully worked out programmes were never accepted in bulk, but his ideas were often borrowed and developed, generally in a way which he had never intended. But always, when the question of a Constitution came up, his name was mentioned first. And in 1799, after Brumaire, it was again Sieyès who presented his life's work, and had it chopped to pieces once more.

The work that made his reputation—" *Qu'est-ce le Tiers-Etat ?* "—appeared anonymously in the early days of 1789, as a development of the " *Essai sur les privilèges*," published in November, 1788. In this he had discussed the debasing effect on social life of the régime of privilege and injustice. In the more famous work he gave his ideas on representative government and on the making of a Constitution, and they were the ideas to which he was faithful all his life : France was to be a democracy, but not what the unintelligent meant by a democracy. He would never support universal suffrage, since the vote must be used intelligently, by people who understand what they are voting about. He would have agreed with Saint-Just that the general will of the people must be an expression of active not passive interest, and that where the general will loses itself in speculation, unscrupulous men will not hesitate to form public opinion at moments of high emotion. Will must not become caprice. But Saint-Just would have said to Sieyès, as he did say to others, in 1793, that a Constitution must be lucid, and easily applicable.

The opening phrases of this work, so often quoted, expressed the mood of the moment in words that anybody could understand : " *Qu'est-ce le Tiers-Etat ? Tout. Qu'a-t-il été jusqu'à présent ? Rien. Que demande-t-il à devenir ? Quelque chose.* " And following that " *Tout*," he argued that, if the people could not form a States General, then they must form a National Assembly. But, having written out his plan for this National Assembly, he fore-shadows his rôle as what Bonaparte would have called an ideologue. " But, someone will say, these things are absolutely impracticable at the present time. Very well. My task is not to put my ideas

into practice, but is the task of all patriotic writers : It is to present the truth. Let others approach the truth according to their capability and to the circumstances."

This unattractive man was unhappy all through his life. Son of poor parents who lived in Fréjus, he was forced by a delicate constitution to abandon his ambition of becoming a soldier. He was persuaded to study for the priesthood, but he had no vocation and grew up embittered. Losing his faith in God, he lost his faith in human nature<sup>1</sup>. He grew to believe that nothing was worth doing in an abominable world.. He became secretary to a bishop and fulfilled his dull duties without enthusiasm. Lack of money, uncongenial work, a consciousness of ability which nobody seemed to appreciate, increased his discontent, and when the Revolution came it might have been made for him. But he was soon to be disappointed again. He discovered that he was no orator, and that his colleagues were ready enough to revere him as a philosopher, but had no taste for his dissertations. Unfortunately, he was unable to disguise his contempt for his fellows, and there was an unusual and estimable trait in his character which made him despise them most when they offered him the flattery which he seemed to require ; as though he were saying : " I know this is my due, but what mean-spirited people must they be who thus pander to human weaknesses." He made himself thoroughly disliked, but that only served to assure him that he was a man of powerful intellect among fools. He withdrew himself more and more as the Revolution became more violent, preferring intrigue behind the scenes to the hurly-burly of the conflicts between the factions. " The mole of the Revolution," Robespierre called him. Some—including Talleyrand—attributed this to mere cowardice. His great moment should have come when he was appointed to the Committee which prepared the Constitution of '92, but, because Condorcet overshadowed him, he retired to sulk and, still sulking, refused to make suggestions for the Constitution of '93. When Louis XVI was condemned to death, Sieyès acquired a reputation for savagery which was no part of his character. He voted "*La Mort*" and is supposed to have

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve, in his essay on Sieyès (*Gauseries du Lundi*, vol V) quotes some revelatory passages from the private papers of the ex-Abbé.

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added the brutal words, "*sans phrases.*" I prefer the explanation that those on the front benches passed back to those who could not hear so well the news that Sieyès, unlike some of the deputies, had voted for death without making a speech. He remained a Monarchist after the King's death, and was rebuffed, insulted, laughed at. But always there were those who believed that somewhere in that brain reposed the perfect Constitution. After Thermidor, when all the great names had disappeared, Sieyès was still there, grave and disdainful, like a ghost of '89. He still enjoyed that reputation for sagacity, which owed something to his professorial features, but far more to his capacity for uttering unintelligible formulæ in a weighty manner.

By one of those ironies which history loves, this dry pedant was to be the man who prepared the coming of Bonaparte. This perfect specimen of the ideologue, a race so loathed by Bonaparte, was to be fellow-conspirator and colleague of the young conqueror. "*La politique,*" said Sieyès, "*n'est pas la science de ce qui est, mais de ce qui doit être.*" It is difficult to imagine a remark which would better reflect the mind and temperament of the ex-Abbé, or more violently outrage the realism of Bonaparte.

## IV

Early in the year 1789 Bonaparte had abandoned the idea of an invasion of England. He had studied the question thoroughly, had visited the French ports, and had digested the information supplied by Kléber from le Havre, by Andréossy from Antwerp, by Desaix from Brest. His conclusions were set out in a letter which he wrote to the Directory on February 23rd, 1798. In this letter he said that without command of the sea, the only hope of success lay in surprise. It might be possible to elude the English blockading fleets, or to make the channel passage in small boats during the hours of darkness, and land at points on the Kent or Sussex coast. The latter operation would mean seven or eight hours at sea, and therefore could only be carried out in the winter, or not later than April. In calm summer weather the thing would be impossible, with the English watching and waiting. He

suggested that the invasion might be practicable in 1799, but by then new troubles in Europe might prevent it. He held out no solid hopes, and left the Directory in no doubt that his advice was to abandon the idea altogether. Deceive the English, he said, into thinking we are going to invade them, while in reality we are devoting our attention to detaching Hanover and Hamburg from England. He adds that it might be possible to send an expedition to the Levant, to threaten the Indian trade-route. If the Directory rejected all these suggestions, then he saw no alternative to making peace with England. Malmesbury would be more amenable than in '96 and '97.

Having made up his mind to have nothing more to do with a direct invasion of England, Bonaparte returned to that old dream which appealed to the soldier, the statesman and the poet in him. He had talked to Junot of the piercing of the isthmus of Suez, on those walks which the two young men took together in Paris. During the Italian campaigns he had read all the books he could find on Egypt, and had been deeply impressed by Volney's *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie*. At Ancona he had realized what a port on the Adriatic might mean—"Ten days from Constantinople," he wrote to the Directory. And now he pressed the Directors to adopt his scheme for a conquest of Malta and Egypt.

It was no new idea in French foreign policy. Louis XIV had for a moment been persuaded that the easiest way to ruin Dutch commerce was to seize Egypt. Early in 1797 Magallon, the French Consul in Cairo, had reported to the Directory that Egypt would be delighted to be liberated from the Turks, and that the Turks would be equally delighted to see the Mamelukes expelled. But the foreign Minister, Delacroix was afraid of a break with Turkey. Later in the year Talleyrand read a paper to the Institute on French colonial policy, in which he revived Choiseul's plan for a conquest of Egypt to balance a possible loss of the American Colonies. But the theme of Bonaparte's suggestion was in Volney; the threat to India, the Suez passage to the East, the mastery of the Mediterranean.

The Directors found it difficult to make up their minds. Knowing nothing of the sea or naval matters, they had regarded the crossing of the channel as something as calculable as a march

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to a battefield. Bonaparte had explained the risks to them, and they were now entitled to ask how the French fleet, which could not cover a channel passage, proposed to cover a Mediterranean passage. Further they were asked to dispense with their greatest soldier at the very moment when Vienna was preparing another Coalition. And again—a matter of great importance to them—there seemed to be no money in the idea. Against all this must be set their desire to be rid of Bonaparte, at almost any cost, perhaps for ever. He argued with them, saying that he would march on India, where Tippoo Sahib, primed by French agents, would join him, that Egypt would supply food to France, that England would be forced to sue for peace. But to him it was to be no mere military operation. He would bring French civilization to the Egyptians, and slake his imagination by awakening the East from its long sleep. He would take with him engineers, archæologists, scientists, men of letters and would construct something that would endure. That was the poetry of the idea. The prose was that indirect attack on England, which was the meaning of Bantry Bay, of Humbert's landing in Killala Bay, and of that alliance with Russia in 1801, which was to have been followed by a Russian march to the Indus, a French attack on Persia, and a joint invasion of India. The grandeur of his present plan could not hide its extreme audacity, and the Directors went on hesitating, while time grew short. By August the Nile would be in flood.

It was March 5th before the Directors gave in. Berne, captured at the beginning of the month, provided the funds for the expedition. Bonaparte set to work with ferocious energy, using his gift of concentrating on a dozen tasks at once. The prospect of action after what, for him, had been idle days, filled him with his old self-confidence. His imagination spread its wings. By the end of April he was ready to set out for Toulon, and the Directors were beginning to be sure that they would not regret his departure, when there came grave news from Vienna. Bernadotte, recently appointed Ambassador, had by his usual indiscretions, made himself unpopular at a time when the greatest tact was essential. There was an attack on the Embassy, the French flag was torn down, and Bernadotte fled, announcing that he would not return until the Austrian Government had made

formal apology and reparation.<sup>1</sup> The Directors, in a panic, begged Bonaparte to postpone his departure, and to go in person to Rastadt to mend the mischief. No sooner had he accepted this mission than the Directors were once more impaled on the horns of the old dilemma. If he went and was successful, he would return with added prestige and popularity. If he did not go, Austria might take the high hand. However, matters settled themselves satisfactorily. Bonaparte wrote a threatening letter to Cobenzl, which terrified them. Moreover he did not trouble to show the letter to anybody. This gave the Directors a pretext for cancelling his mission. Austria lay down, for the Emperor had good reasons for swallowing his pride until Bonaparte was out of the way, and the Directors informed their General that he could set out for Toulon at once. He had wasted ten days. He bought the house in the rue de la Victoire (hitherto rented from Julie Talma), and, taking Josephine with him, started for Toulon. Travelling by Auxerre, Lyons and Avignon, he reached the port on May 9th. On May 19th the 45,000 men, the guns and the equipment and stores were on board, and Bonaparte took leave of Josephine. "When will you return?" she asked. "Six years—six months. Perhaps, never," he answered. From the deck of the *Orient* he heard her last words, "If you go to Thebes, send me a small obelisk."

A few days before this a prisoner had escaped from the Temple prison in Paris, whom Bonaparte was to find across his path at Acre. His name was Sidney Smith.

## v

The people of Paris watched him go with disappointment. But he left behind him a hope in all sections of the populace and in all parties. There were Jacobins who claimed him as a Jacobin, and called him General Vendémiaire, and Royalists who thought that one day he might be their Monk, and honest Repub-

<sup>1</sup> An account of what occurred, by an eye-witness, was published in London, in an English translation from the German, in 1798. It appeared as a pamphlet and was called "A Faithful Account of the Riot in Vienna, 13th April, 1798." It is in the Joly collection of pamphlets.

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licans who believed that he alone could establish a stable Government. The learned men of the Institute dreamed of a Government of intellectuals under such a leader, and the cloudy Sieyès and his friends perhaps saw him as their instrument for the return of the House of Orleans. Talleyrand had understood the high intelligence of the man to whom he had attached himself, and could be sure that under him there would be no return of the Bourbons, and therefore no disgrace and ruin for Talleyrand. The country people said that he would come back one day, and all would be well. Only the Directors and their circle hoped that they had seen the last of him.

Campo-Formio, welcomed with such joy by the French people, was but an illusory peace, an uneasy armistice, as were to be all the treaties of all the years of the epic. War was the legacy left to Bonaparte by the Convention, and however far he led his armies, whether across the sands of Syria or into the frozen darkness of Russia, the culminating victory which was to restore peace eluded him always. At the end, as at the beginning, he found England, that one stubborn and never-despairing and indomitable enemy of the Revolution, denying his claims, unmoved by his apologetics, undaunted by his legend. Again and again English money, but also English courage and persistence, revived the flagging spirits of less robust nations. The four years of the Consulate showed what Bonaparte could do as a builder, and there is every reason to believe that he then planned to spend his life in work more productive than warfare. No intelligent soldier has ever denied that the purpose of war is peace, and this most intelligent of all soldiers wanted power, not for its own sake, but because power would enable him to put his creative ideas to the test. He gave the French people glory, which they loved, but the great gift of peace which they demanded from him he was never able to bring them.



## CHAPTER XI

### *The Blunders of the Directory*

#### I

A WEEK before Bonaparte embarked at Toulon the Directory once more violated the Constitution, in order to keep itself in power. It was quite obvious that the elections of '98 were bound to reflect public opinion even more than hitherto, and for this reason : that, whereas the men of Thermidor had, up to now, been able to act now against one party and now against another, after Fructidor there was a tendency for the parties to combine. Candidates who were dissatisfied with the Government for honourable reasons, saw their best chance in joining the so-called "anarchists," whose anger was mere exasperation at being kept so long from power. The signs of what was coming were easy to read, and the Directors made up their minds that they must act without any scruples to avert this new crisis. A list of official candidates was drawn up and agents, well furnished with money for bribes, were sent out into the Departments ; and, in order to keep out those who were not wanted, it was decided that the retiring deputies should accept or refuse the credentials of the newly-elected deputies. In other words, the old Assemblies should choose the new Assemblies. A Government paper said, with shameless brevity, that any Terrorists elected would not be allowed to sit. Two opposition papers which called attention to this remarkable statement were suppressed. Treilhard, on whom the Directors could rely, was illegally substituted for François de Neufchâteau, and Sieyès, whose intrigues were always redoubtable, was dispatched on a mission to Berlin.

In spite of all these precautions, the elections turned out badly for the Directors. Large numbers of people, disgusted by the events of Fructidor, despaired of ever getting rid of the Government, and did not bother to vote ; and when the votes were counted it was seen that there was a good working majority

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against the Directors. A committee was formed to examine this unsatisfactory state of affairs, and the chairman, Bailleul, made the naïve proposal that, in the case of a Deputy who was hostile to the Directors, the election should be declared invalid. It was argued, without a smile, that the electors had been warned to return good Republicans, and, if they had failed to do so, it proved that they were imbeciles, unqualified to cast a vote. The proposal of Bailleul was adopted and became the Law of the 22nd Floréal (May 11th). But the advantage thus gained was bungled. A number of the newly-elected deputies were prevented from sitting, but the invalidations were too few. Barras and his colleagues, while they were about it, should have done the thing thoroughly and kept out all who were opposed to them. As it was, they let in many of them, thus incurring all the hatred roused by their contempt for the Constitution, without solving their old problem of how, by one final sweeping stroke, they might gain untroubled dominion. Floréal was an improvisation, a hurried attempt to ward off a growing danger. That danger was that all parties would unite to get rid of the Government. And that is what happened a year later.

Between Fructidor and Floréal the lethargy of the people deepened. It was understood that what was going on in Paris—the intrigues, the corruption, the farcical annual elections—was supposed to be nothing whatever to do with the great mass of the French people. It was a sordid game being played for the benefit of the politicians and their parasites. What was the point of registering a vote if the man you elected was not allowed to sit? Disillusionment had succeeded to the ardours and enthusiasms of the earlier years, and that unfailing spring of energy which once drove the humble to revolt was dried up. For a moment the return of a victorious soldier, who seemed to bring lasting peace and the promise of order and repose, had led them to hope once more, but he had passed through Paris, waking the sleepers, and then had vanished again, leaving the factions to continue their antics. Later, when the Coalition began another series of campaigns and the frontiers were threatened, there was no Danton to rouse the young men, and no singing of the great songs of the Republic. People began to say that if the extreme

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Jacobins could pull down the Directory, so much the better. Even they should have support, for nothing could be worse than the present Government, and any change would be better than the slow ruin which was engulfing the country.

Fructidor had stunned the royalists, but Floréal brought them renewed hope. They argued that such a state of affairs could not last, and that if the people had to choose between them and the wilder Jacobins, they would choose them. Louis XVIII played with the idea of buying Barras, with a promise of indemnity for his past crimes and a post at court. At the same time, he complained to Saint-Priest that Mallet du Pan was still warning him against retaining any idea of bringing back the old régime. Even now, neither he nor his followers in exile understood what an opportunity they were, for the tenth time, throwing away. But in France moderate Republicans began once more to think about a Constitutional Monarchy. In the West the royalist leaders collected their bands. Frotté, Puisaye, Suzannet in London put the position to Artois: France was not royalist, but could be made royalist, if, through the Princes, the people could be assured of an end to their present sufferings.

By July the enraged extremists, the anarchists, as they were called, had started a campaign which was guaranteed to win them support from all shades of opinion. They began to attack the immorality and corruption of the Directors rather than their lack of a policy. Their private lives, their embezzlements, speculations, bribes, thefts, were brought up against them, and they were accused by name. At last all the rumours were given substance, and what people had been saying for a long time was made the subject of an enquiry. A report followed, and the fury of the assault redoubled. Among those who became prominent in the campaign was a young deputy named Lucien Bonaparte. It was soon evident that this denunciation of the Directory was far more popular than the old Jacobin policy of repeating the ridiculous fantasies of Babeuf. To inflame the general discontent, the winter months of 1798 were unusually severe. Prices were still rising, and food growing scarcer. The replacement of the worthless *assignats* by *mandats territoriaux* created a few more rich men.

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The Catholics were being subjected to a new outburst of persecution. Nothing the agents of the Government did was able to stop the resurrection of the Faith, but they used every device to impede it. They insisted on the *culte décadaire*, which meant the abolition of Sunday, but the people shut their shops on Sundays and went to Mass in their churches, and ignored the *décadi*. They deported priests at the mere whim of a Director or his friends. And even where they could not abolish the Mass, they prevented the full worship which Catholics take for granted—processions, the keeping of Feast Days, and so on. The contempt which the people had for the “theophilanthropic” fooleries and the state religion of the *décadi* was sharpened by the knowledge that the Government, unable to suppress the Catholic religion, was determined to cause as much annoyance as possible—for instance, by forbidding the sale of fish on Fridays, and by ostentatiously setting up the national altar in the churches, and even holding the State services while the Catholics were holding theirs. The motive for all this was far more political than anti-religious. Like the Committee of Public Safety, the Directors, with the exception of La Revellière, hated the Church only because it was to them the most formidable opponent of the Revolution.

## II

As though they were determined to make every mistake possible, the Directors, having brought France to the brink of moral, social, and financial ruin, were by now following an inept foreign policy. Unwisely, they were not satisfied with the money and the plunder which came to them from Italy. As soon as Bonaparte had left Milan, in the middle of November of 1797, they had seen their chance to substitute their own policy for his. In the months that followed they gave to Europe, as they had already given to France, a spectacle of incompetence and rascality rarely equalled by any Government. They succeeded in reviving all that hatred for the doctrines of the Revolution which the Terrorists of '93 and '94 had spread far and wide, so that reasonable and moderate men, who had begun to understand and to admire

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the constructive genius of Bonaparte, were justified in once more judging the Republic by the actions of those who preached and practised its worst excesses. "They take every opportunity to destroy every institution that is most sacred and most valuable in every nation where their armies have made their appearance; and under the name of liberty they have resolved to make every country in substance, if not in form, a province dependent on themselves, through the despotism of Jacobin societies." The words of Pitt, spoken in the House of Commons in February, 1793, might well be the words of any Italian or Swiss or Dutchman in 1798. If the Directors and their agents had deliberately attempted to prove that everything said against the Revolution by its most uncompromising opponents was true, they could have chosen no better method than that which was now revealed as their "policy." By creating disorders which served as their pretext for tyranny, they undid the patient work of Bonaparte. The first stirrings of Italian unity, produced not by slow and cautious labours, but by brutality and oppression, were inspired by hostility to France, not by friendship for her. By the time the Directors realized that they had raised up enemies all over Italy, it was too late to check the mischief. The enthusiasm was not for the Revolution, but against it. Then, with Bonaparte in Egypt, the French Government suddenly found itself faced with a new Coalition of European Powers on frontiers which their own follies had made into gateways for invasion.

Bonaparte had expressed to Talleyrand, in one of those lucid phrases of his, what he considered should be the Government's principles in the conduct of affairs—and the words applied to foreign as well as domestic policy: energy without fanaticism, principles without demagoguery, severity without brutality. And in his proclamation to the Cisalpine Republic, a week before he left Milan, he developed these ideas. The answer of the Directory was to send out agitators, whom they called envoys or even ambassadors, to prepare, with the Jacobin elements with whom Bonaparte had refused to work, discontents and insurrections. Their task was made easier by the fact that, as soon as Bonaparte had re-crossed the Alps, many of the Generals encouraged the extremists, and took part in the disorders instead of suppressing

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them. The peasants, ruined by the exactions of the military and tormented by that persecution of the Church which always accompanied the politics of the Jacobins, talked of nothing but revolt. The townspeople, robbed by Generals who were unable to pay their mutinous troops, listened willingly to the agitators. It was soon easy for the Directory to say that evidently Bonaparte's policy had been the wrong one, and that the time had come to try theirs.

The trouble began in Rome. There Joseph Bonaparte, the ambassador, had managed to get himself involved in the intrigues against the Pope. General Duphot arrived and, in the last days of 1797, the extremists, encouraged by him, attempted to seize the city. There was a clash between the Papal troops and the insurgents, and Duphot, attempting, too late, to intervene, was killed. Joseph fled with his family, and the Directory found itself provided with an excellent pretext, in the "murder" of a French General, to tear up the treaty of Tolentino, and to make some more money. Berthier was ordered to march on Rome. On February 15th, 1798, he took possession of the city and addressed the populace in true Jacobin style, invoking the shades of Cato, Brutus, and Cicero, and bidding them receive the homage of free men. "The children of the Gauls," he said, in an unbelievably absurd speech, "olive branch in hand, are come to this august spot (the Capitol) to set up there once again the altars of Liberty." Translated from rhetoric into cold prose this meant the seizure of the eighty-year-old Pius VI, who died a few weeks later in captivity at Valence, a levy of fifteen million francs, various minor impositions, pay and provisions and quarters for the invading army, and a general pillage of works of art. Berthier, recalled to become chief-of-staff of the army which was to invade England, was succeeded by Masséna, a notorious money-maker, who in his turn made way for Saint-Cyr. On March 20th the Roman Republic was proclaimed.

In this month of March Ginguené, a vain and pompous man of letters, arrived in Turin, calling himself ambassador (and his wife, much to Talleyrand's amusement, ambassadress—a non-existent title). His mission was to get rid of the King of Sardinia, Charles Emmanuel, and to stir up disorder all over Piedmont. One way of doing this was to spread the idea that the original alliance between the King and the French Republic connoted the

abdication of the King. Meanwhile, in order to leave no doubt of his intentions towards the Court at Turin, Ginguéné had refused to allow his wife to be presented in the customary costume. A revolt led by a Piedmontese in French uniform, who boasted that he was a French agent, forced the King's ambassador in Paris to protest strongly against the action of French troops in supporting the rebels, and of course Talleyrand assured him that France was in no way involved in the disturbances. Ginguéné was then left to settle the affair. As the disturbances increased, it became the duty of the Directory to say that the only way of restoring order was for French troops to occupy the citadel in Turin. That was the first step towards a French invasion and the expulsion of the sovereign.

It was a similar story in the other Italian territories. Garat was sent to Naples to prepare a revolution, and the sequel was the invasion of Championnet, the establishment of the Parthenopian Republic (which lasted three months) and the abominable revenge of Queen Marie-Caroline, carried out by Nelson to amuse Lady Hamilton. In Milan the envoy Trouvé prepared the iron chains with which Talleyrand boasted that he had secured the Cisalpine Republic. Sottin and Belleville at Genoa performed the same service for the Ligurian Republic.

But there was more foolish work for the Directory to do. Controlling valuable passages into Italy, and at the same time guarding the way into France, was a country which would have been very useful as a friendly neutral—Switzerland. The eighteenth century had been a time of peace and increasing prosperity for the cantons. They had their own governments and their own customs and laws, and there were a number of loose federations. No people was less ready for a Jacobin experiment. There was a group of cantons, Berne, Fribourg, Lucerne, Soleure, in which the government was completely aristocratic, and the movement of reform, towards a national federation, though it was affected by the French Revolution, had nothing in common with the destructive doctrines of the Jacobins. But the Directors could say, with justice, that royalist agents had used Switzerland as a base for their intrigues, and the tales of the wealth of the towns encouraged them to step in to defend the peasants, as they put it,

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against the aristocrats. In Paris there was a Helvetic Club, whose members thought that French intervention would help the political movement which they represented. So French agents were sent to carry out the preparatory intrigues and to ferment disorder. As soon as the people of Berne had overthrown their Government, General Brune marched in, seized the treasury (which paid for the Egyptian expedition) and proclaimed a Helvetic Republic, "One and indivisible." This act of violence was both dangerous for France and, at the same time, the stupidest of all the Directory's experiments in foreign policy. It showed a startling ignorance of the history, the geography, and the temperament of the cantons. A few townsmen were glad enough to usurp the places of the aristocratic families and the rich merchants, but the peasants of the mountains and the forests had nothing to gain and everything to lose by the sudden upheaval, as they proved by fighting courageously and stubbornly. The Directors had succeeded in making another enemy, and one in a strategic position.

The Directory could not have done more to provoke Austria and the other Powers to a renewal of hostilities. But the politicians had no monopoly of stupidity. In April of '98, as we have seen, the braggart Bernadotte had run up the tricolour in Vienna, and there was a riot. The flag was torn to pieces and Bernadotte had to fly. If Austria had been ready for war, she had her chance. But Austria, not being ready, had decided to see what could be done by negotiations on the subject of Italy. The work which the Directors had done in the conquered territories encouraged the Emperor to think that the time had come to rearrange the map of Europe rather more to his liking, especially as Bonaparte was out of the way. There was a meeting at Selz at the end of May between Cobenzl and François de Neufchâteau the foppish ex-Director, followed by others. At the end of a month it was clear that France would not yield an inch of Italian or Swiss territory to Austria, and Cobenzl's advice to the Emperor was to continue the war. Meanwhile, the establishment of the revolutionary calendar in the Rhineland—there, as in France, an anti-Catholic measure—and the confiscation of Church property, made the French Government still more unpopular. At the same time,



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Russia's Czar, who liked to think of himself as the protector of Malta, flew into a rage when its capture was announced. Russia, Austria, England—and Prussia hesitating. The only good news the Directors had was from Egypt, and that was connected with the name which they hoped would soon be forgotten.

### III

As 1798 passed into 1799 and the spring elections drew near, it was evident that the Directory would soon face its supreme crisis. The Government was bankrupt, and, as the Coalition gathered, it appeared evident that the chief means of raising money—that is, by conquest and rapine—would soon be taken from them. The Ministries and the administrative Services were rotten with corruption. The army contractors made fortunes. The big usurers had never been so successful. The soldiers and sailors were in rags—ill-fed, ill-equipped, unpaid. Less than 200,000 men had to cover the frontiers and counter a series of threats all over Europe, from the Low Countries to Southern Italy. And it was when these threats were imminent that the Directors sent Championnet to expel the Bourbons from Naples. Within six months Hungarian hussars had murdered two of the French plenipotentiaries at Rastadt, Jourdan had been beaten at Stokach by the Archduke Charles, Schérer at Magnano, Moreau driven back into Piedmont. Souvorov and his Russians defeated MacDonald at the Trebbia, in a three-day battle. Italy, save Genoa, was lost, Switzerland in revolt. Cadoudal was busy in Brittany, and the West was ready for armed insurrection. All over the Departments of the South there were royalist proclamations and gatherings of bands. And, to crown all, in the April elections the Jacobins had been elected in large numbers and the Directory had not dared to repeat the tricks of Floréal.

France was in the extreme of peril. The two Chambers were impotent. One man acted at once, and with energy. Barras, the only Director who had survived all the changes of the four years, arranged with the new opposition to sacrifice his colleagues to the public outcry, on condition that he himself remained in power.

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Last Attempt of the Jacobins : Sieyès Sets to Work*

#### I

THE loss of Italy and the menacing march of the new Coalition came at an opportune moment for those extreme Jacobins who at last found themselves in power. They had been returned with the support of the moderate Republicans and even of royalists, and to win further support all they had to do now was to continue their attacks on the Government and to demand an enquiry into the causes of the present external disasters and their accompanying internal chaos. Even men who detested them were ready to make use of them, since they seemed to be the only party strong enough to challenge the Directors. But it was not to save France that these new men had carried on their campaign against the Government. The chance they had seen and seized was a chance, after so many disappointments of revenging themselves on their enemies, of enjoying the fruits of office, and of establishing a second Terror which would secure them against further persecution. They were on fire with the ideas of the old Jacobins, and they brought with them the old merciless spirit of faction. They found in the Chambers, and particularly in the Five Hundred, men of their own colour who had lost the Jacobin energy, but who, in contact with these new arrivals, awoke from their lethargy and helped to create a majority. They were joined by men of a finer stamp, who, in this hour of peril, were deceived into mistaking the loud voices and the passionate utterances for genuine love of country, and so were ready to lend themselves to the repressive measures urged by the extremists.

As soon as the elections were confirmed by the Chambers, the assault began on the Directory, and on all the embezzlers, speculators, and swindling financiers. One man stood out, marked for attack : Barras. But the blows were soon deflected to Reubell and Treilhard. When Reubell withdrew, he was

given, according to two of his colleagues, a considerable sum of money out of the secret funds, and kept his carriage and horses. According to Sieyès, who was to replace him, he even took the furniture with him. Sieyès had accepted the post from Berlin. He arrived at the beginning of June, and began to burrow without delay.

The disgruntled Sieyès had had only one reason for going to Berlin. He wanted to return with increased prestige. The Directors were only too glad to let him go. He had the gift of exasperating all with whom he came in contact by his supercilious assumption of superiority, his contempt for his colleagues, and his long-winded dissertations, which nobody could understand. His mission in Berlin was to win over Prussia against England, Russia, and Austria. The young Frederick-William III had inherited from his father the policy of neutrality, and the able supporter of that policy, Haugwitz. It was not merely a question of not joining France. Russia, who had sent Prince Reprnin to negotiate an alliance, received the same reply as Sieyès. On July 5th, 1798, Sieyès was received by Frederick-William and stated the Directory's case. No less suitable ambassador could have been chosen than this regicide who found himself at the court of a young King. His personal appearance, his manner, and his reputation were all against him. Haugwitz had so little use for him that he carried on the discussions by an intermediary, the Jew Ephraim—a bitter blow to the vanity of Sieyès. Talleyrand and the Directors were also disappointed at the Prussian stubbornness, and began to threaten. Sieyès passed on the threats, in vain. For nearly three months France threatened, and Prussia refused to budge. And Sieyès returned to France with nothing achieved, but still with that reputation for great wisdom which failure seemed but to increase.

The mysterious apostate priest was received in Paris like a conqueror, with a salute of twelve guns from the garrison. His previous refusals to take office were attributed to the wisdom and patience of one who knows how to choose his moment. His expressionless face, his slow movements, and his cold disapproval of his surroundings had added to his reputation. The fact that a great deal of what he said was unintelligible had made him an

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oracle. It was believed that if only he could bring himself to put his theories into practice he would startle the world ; and this had been the popular belief for so long that his return from Berlin caused considerable excitement. In the frequently quoted words of Albert Vandal, "*Sa réputation avait grandi de tout ce qu'il n'avait pas fait.*" Like Talleyrand, he had been behind the scenes in many of the dramatic moments of the Revolution and had taken great care not to run himself into danger. Only one thing can have tempted him to leave the comparative safety of Berlin in order to become the colleague of men he loathed and despised—the conviction that now at last the hour had come to produce a Constitution which would save France from ruin. And the first step to take was to get rid of the Directors, and then to put in their place others whom he could dominate. This meant working with his enemies, the extreme Jacobins, and he was willing to undergo even this humiliation.

Treilhard was easily turned out. The Five Hundred discovered that his election a year before had been irregular, and, with the most scrupulous concern for the Constitution, they begged him to end this scandal by giving up his position. The Directory, with melancholy courtesy, added their request for his resignation. One glance at Barras informed him that he had been betrayed, and, like a sensible man, he did what was expected of him ; but, unlike Reubell, he got nothing out of his docility. The honest Gohier, once Minister of Justice, replaced him. La Revellière and Merlin began to grow uneasy. It was evident that Sieyès, Barras, and the two Chambers were working together against the Directory. Treilhard had not attempted to put up a fight. They saw that the next blow would come quickly and that it would be aimed at them. They braced themselves to meet it. And when Sieyès pointed out to them how much to their advantage it would be to resign, they refused.

These two men found themselves suddenly called upon to answer for all the crimes of the Directory. If they would not resign without making a fuss, then they should be hounded from office or, if necessary arrested. They became more stubborn. In the Five Hundred Boulay de la Meurthe organized the campaign against them, and led off with a speech which made no detailed

accusation against them, but emphasized the necessity for getting rid of them. A commission of enquiry, presided over by Boulay, found them guilty of arbitrary acts, and the report was, of course, adopted with enthusiasm. At the Luxembourg, late on the night of the 30th Prairial (June 17th) Merlin and La Revellière made their last stand. They were told that if they refused to resign they would be arrested, and they knew that Joubert or Bernadotte or almost any other General in Paris at the time would gladly undertake that task. Barras, who had not been attacked in Boulay's speech, and who felt himself secure once more, told them bluntly to clear out. Seeing that further argument was waste of time, the two of them resigned. They were replaced by Roger Ducos, an unimportant lawyer, and an unknown General named Moulin, who had fought in the Vendée and served under Santerre the brewer in street-fighting. All Barras had to do now was to pursue his intrigues with the Bourbons and to agree with Sieyès on all matters. "I shall always be of his opinion," he said, "and so he'll think I'm nearly as clever as he is, and we shall live together without any bother." He had received the letter from Louis XVIII, promising him a pardon for all that he had done.

Public opinion, in Paris and in the departments, was unmoved by the crisis of Prairial. The distress everywhere was too acute for the people to attach any importance to yet another quarrel among those whom the Army, with the utmost contempt, now called "the lawyers." Most of them had never heard of Ducos or Gohier or Moulin. Sieyès was merely a philosopher, and no decisive action was expected from such a man. And to many, the survival of the unspeakable Barras only proved that the attempt to purge the Directory was but a half-hearted one, a pretence, a piece of play-acting, to keep the real power in the same discredited hands.

Sieyès had hoped to be master of the Directory, since he was the only one of the five with any intellectual gifts or any real interest in the governance of men. But there was no possibility of the five acting together, or even agreeing on a policy. Ducos quickly became the shadow of Sieyès, without a will or opinion of his own, but Gohier and Moulin sympathized with the Jacobins, while Barras, as usual, worked only for himself. Having secured

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himself against Bourbon vengeance, he established relations with the most violent of the Jacobins, giving them to understand that he could do a great deal for them if they would continue to keep his name out of their campaign against corruption and incompetence. Moreover, it was the Councils, and particularly the Five Hundred, which were now the active element in public life. The newly-elected Jacobins had no stable majority, but they had the ferocious energy of the old Terrorists and, by their clamour, gave the impression of a majority, and frightened many of the timid into following them. It was evident that they would overreach themselves, but meanwhile they were powerful enough to have their way for a while, and, since Sieyès had no command over his fellow-Directors, and the Senate only recovered slowly from the shock of the Jacobin movement, the ex-abbé had to avoid open conflict. He made no secret of his hatred of the new deputies, but even if his colleagues had agreed with him, his offensive airs of superiority, his complete lack of graciousness, and that mantle of mystery in which he wrapped himself, would have alienated them.

The Jacobins lost no time in showing their hand, and they were encouraged when men in sympathy with them were appointed to Ministries. Bernadotte was made Minister for War, Lindet of the Mountain was given Finance, and Marbot commanded the garrison troops. Against these Sieyès could count two friends in power, Bourdon at the Ministry of Marine and Cambacérès at the Ministry of Justice. The bad news from the Armies added strength to their demands for rigorous decrees which recalled the worst hours of the Terror. There was open talk of re-establishing the Committee of Public Safety and the guillotine, supported in the most violent language by the recently freed Press. But what most men remembered about the Committee was not that it had saved France by a form of martial law which only men of exceptional talent could apply with success, and only circumstances of the utmost gravity could justify. What most men remembered was the attempt to prolong a temporary measure into a permanent form of Government. And this they were determined not to endure again. Fear once more awoke, and reasonable men recognized that very shortly the last crisis must be met. Either the

Jacobins would have their way and France would be destroyed, or there must be a break with the last four years ; a new Constitution, and the foundation of the Government solidly based on good laws. Only this would save the Revolution and restore order, dignity, and hope to the country. Honest men, who still believed sincerely in the Revolution and still dreamed of what its principles, honestly applied, might achieve, told each other that no more shuffling of Directors or swing of factions could check the disintegration of the country. These had been temporary expedients, designed always to give one faction power over the other factions. There had been no real attempt at Government, and now they were back where they started after Thermidor. The ghost of Fouquier-Tinville would soon be walking, but this time the great men would not be there to direct the war and to inspire the soldiers to defend the frontiers. For nobody imagined that Destrem or Talot or Lamarque or even Grandmaison was capable of saving France. The few who saw that the new Jacobin movement would destroy the Revolution found themselves in agreement with others who, though their motives were personal, were no less anxious to check the movement. If there was talk of the guillotine, whose head was safe ? This group, a blend of sheer panic and patriotic fervour, was united in its determination to fight the Jacobins. And they found, if not a leader, at any rate a rallying point in Sieyès.

Sieyès had been forced to admit to himself that things had not gone as he had hoped. He was not master of the Directory, and the Jacobin movement was of such strength that he could not yet come out into the open against it. In fact, he was forced to yield ground. Meanwhile, he began to develop his ideas, and, working in secrecy as usual, was not long in discovering the considerable body of opinion which could be used to carry out his projects. His problem was how to gather round him a group powerful enough and daring enough to change the Constitution. Since no *coup d'état* could hope to succeed without the support of the Army, which had now taken the place of the insurrectionary mobs called up by the Government in the early years of the Revolution, he would use a General as a kind of superior policeman. In all the political theories of Sieyès there was room for a limited

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Monarchy, so that when his new Constitution had been accepted, he could summon the House of Orleans. It would be he who had restored the Monarchy, and he would hold such unchallenged power that he would at last be able to put his doctrines into practice. But that was looking far ahead. The restoration of the Monarchy might come slowly, or might not come at all. It was not essential to his plans. For, whatever happened, he would be the real ruler of France, with the General, whoever he might be, still in the position of a superior policeman; an instrument controlled by Sieyès. Dropping a hint here, whispering a word there, he set about his work. Thus were sown the seeds of Brumaire.

## II

In July, with the advance of Suvorov in Italy continuing every day, and the Coalition drawing encouragement from its victories, the Jacobins made their great attempt to return to '93. The administration, the police were full of their friends and agents, and they were the only group who knew exactly what it was they wanted to do, and had made up their minds how to do it—which is why they gave the impression of being a majority. The worse the news of the war was, the better it served their purpose, permitting them to appear as the only true patriots, and thus cloaking their real intentions. They very quickly lost the support of the royalists and moderates who had helped to put them into the Chambers, and their attempts to stir up the people failed. The old appeal to the mob was unanswered. But their opponents were without even the semblance of unity. All they had in common was fear and hatred of the Jacobins and contempt for the Directors and deputies who appeared to be paralysed. Talleyrand was forced to resign from the Ministry of External Affairs, and there was already a suspicion that Sieyès was making himself difficult. Ducos, who was supposed to obey their orders, was seen to be completely under the thumb of Sieyès; Barras, still walking the tightrope, was disinclined to interfere with anybody, and later was evidently working in secret with Sieyès; Gohier and Moulins turned out to be more fatuous than had been suspected. In other



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words, Sieyès was about to become master of the Directory. There was always the danger that the royalists might use him, as they had used the Jacobins. Time was short, for all parties, and the Jacobins were determined to use their flying start and to press their advantage.

The impulse of the popular movements had always come from the Clubs. So, in order to breathe the old fire into the dispirited people, these clubs were re-opened all over France. And the most famous of them all, the Jacobins, was re-started in Paris. In order to avoid frightening those who were haunted by unpleasant memories, it now called itself the Society of the Friends of Equality and Liberty; but nobody imagined it was anything but the Jacobins Club reconstituted. The choice of a meeting-hall was not easy, since no quarter of the capital was willing to have such men in its midst. But the cowardice of the Government solved the problem, and the Manège was re-opened for their sessions. This suited the Jacobins admirably, because the building was in the care of the Government, and thus they seemed to be extending their patronage to the Club. Furthermore the Manège was one of the sacred places of the Revolution, where all three Assemblies had sat.

Pressed by the Five Hundred, the Ancients voted the Conscription decree. The effect on the country was disastrous, and the attempt to carry it out met with considerable opposition, especially in the royalist departments. Everybody knew that the Government's mismanagement of the war extended to the smallest details. While the contractors made money, the soldiers were left unpaid and ill-clothed. Moreover, although the threat of invasion was real enough, the young men listened in vain for a voice to inspire them, and, not hearing it, they remained sullen and distrustful. They had no confidence in the ability of the Government to defeat the Coalition. They had seen the results of the pillaging expeditions in the enrichment of contemptible men, while the Government remained bankrupt and the poor starved. They were sceptical when they heard the language of '93 spoke by adventurers whom they despised. The Republic had promised them so much, and given them so little.

A second decree applied what was called a forced loan. It was

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a scheme for extorting enormous sums from the rich. These sums were to be determined by juries, or, in other words, committees of spies, who found themselves at last in a position to pay off old scores. The response to the decree was swift. The rich adopted every dodge, from sham bankruptcy to emigration, in order to avoid payment. Those who were not clever enough to elude the law drastically cut down their expenses at once, with the obvious result that businesses fell to pieces, unemployment and starvation increased, and the poor became the chief victims of the decree. The Treasury collected less than half the sum expected.

A third decree required each commune to furnish a list of hostages, to be held for the misdeeds of their émigré or royalist relatives, and either deported or fined. It had the opposite effect to that intended. It roused Cadoudal and his men in Brittany, sent de Frotté through Normandy to organize resistance, and inflamed the Vendée, Anjou, and even the departments of the Midi. At one stroke the work of pacification carried out by Hoche was brought to nothing, and a solid body of royalist insurrection appeared once more, at the very moment of the country's gravest peril.

### III

While the Jacobins seemed to be doing everything in their power to turn all sane opinion against them, Sieyès had been working quickly and quietly and he had found his soldier—or, rather, Fouché had pointed him out. He was a dashing young General of thirty, of whom Bonaparte had a very high opinion. "I leave you Joubert," he had said before setting out for Egypt. Joubert was a man of intelligence as well as a good soldier. He had fought in Italy under Bonaparte, and in Holland, and had since watched with repulsion the progressive misgovernment which had reduced France to something near anarchy. He was a Republican of the more moderate sort, and a man who might be expected to do the work required of him without becoming inordinately ambitious. He would serve as the instrument of

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the transition from chaos to ordered Government, and perhaps to Monarchy. Talking over his now well-developed plans with Fouché, Sieyès had said: "*Je cherche une épée,*" and Fouché had named Joubert.<sup>1</sup> But there was a drawback. Joubert was not at all well-known. His name would mean nothing to the people. He must, therefore, be given a chance to make his reputation; and there was the chance under his hand. If he were appointed to command in Italy, and there was a resounding victory, he could return to Paris as the saviour of the country. If he failed, someone else would have to be found. There was a greater name in the minds of the plotters, but it was safer to employ Joubert. Besides, Bonaparte was in Egypt, and probably would never escape the English fleet. If Joubert returned from Italy with a victory, he would be in a position to undertake an unconstitutional task in order to save the Revolution—for there was no possibility of changing the Constitution by legal methods.

Joubert left Paris on July 16th to take command against Suvorov, with Moreau at his side. Sieyès, now President of the Directory, began his bitter struggle with the Jacobins, whose suspicions had been awakened. They could guess that something was brewing, from the attitude of certain deputies, and from the outspoken defiance of others. Sieyès persuaded the Senate to serve a notice to quit on the Jacobins. Turned out of the Manège, they retired to the Church of St. Thomas d'Aquin and began to attack Sieyès with the utmost violence. The only step for the Directors to take, after having begun the attack, was to continue it. A retreat would finish them. So they decided to do something which, by its very audacity, was unexpected. They would close the Club. They—but who? It was the job of the Minister of Police. But Bourguignon was not the man to carry it off. Talleyrand said: "The only person who can fight the Jacobins is a Jacobin." And he named Fouché, then Minister at the Hague. And Fouché saw his chance and took it. He came tearing back from the Hague as soon as the summons arrived.

<sup>1</sup> While Fouché was in Milan, representing the French Republic, he became friendly with Joubert, and pressed Sieyès to make him Governor of Paris.

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Ever since Thermidor Barras had been the patron and protector of Fouché, and was particularly pleased to use him now. A Jacobin Minister of Police should reassure the extremists. He was surprised that Sieyès did not oppose the appointment, but he probably did not know how deeply Fouché was already involved in the conspiracy. Both Directors imagined they were using Fouché. But Fouché had his own ideas about that. As for the people, what could they conclude from the return of this notorious agent of the Terror but that the Directory were secretly hand in glove with the Jacobins? They did not know that he was in Paris to further the plans of Sieyès. If the Jacobins were not stamped out, there would be a royalist revival, and the Bourbons would come back. And Fouché had not been given a pardon, like Barras. The three apostates, Talleyrand, Sieyès, Fouché, all had the strongest interest in saving the Revolution, and poor Barras, the only prominent regicide who would have been safe under the Bourbons, was the only one who fell before Brumaire.

Fouché had his own way of doing his work. He knew he had been brought from the Hague to strike a mortal blow at the Jacobins, by shutting down their Club. But when the Directors asked him how he proposed to set about it, he replied that he would deport the remnant of the royalists of Fructidor, going on to explain his surprising tactics. If he threatened these men—for that was all it amounted to—the Jacobins would be unable to protest when he turned on them. He was showing his impartiality as an instrument of the Law. The Jacobins' turn would come next, and spectators would praise the scrupulous fairness of his methods. It did not turn out as he had expected. He prepared a report on the popular Societies, in which their uses were admitted, but in which they were warned that severe measures would be taken against them if their contumacy continued. The reception given to the report in the Five Hundred, and at the Church in the rue du Bac, was stormy, and Fouché was accused of being the tool of royalist conspirators. There was no doubt that his arrival in Paris and his swift entry on the political scene had brought matters to a head. The Five Hundred and the Club did all they could do—openly defied him. There is a story that when the Five Hundred were about to outlaw him,

and the old cry of "*Hors la loi !*" was ringing through the Palais-Bourbon, a sound of hoofs outside, and the rattle and clatter of arms, reduced the noisiest to a state of terror. They remembered Fructidor. Fouché, goes the story, had asked an officer who was drilling his men in the neighbourhood, to gallop them up and down outside the building. He was not in the least shaken by the opposition he had aroused, and never in his career did he act with more decision and courage. He persuaded the Directory to authorize him to go to the rue du Bac, close the church of St. Thomas d'Aquin, and seize all documents. At the same time he continued to threaten the royalists with domiciliary visits. The Directory, with the exception of Gohier and Moulin, who counted for nothing, were glad enough to discuss the closing of the Club. What made them debate for some time was the audacity of the idea. Bernadotte, Minister of War, Augereau, Jourdan, now President of the Five Hundred, were all active supporters of the Club. But Fouché knew, from police reports and from his own observation, that there was no danger that the Sections or the mobs would raise a hand to save the Jacobins. And Marbot had been replaced by Lefebvre as commander of the garrison troops. Bernadotte remained, but ten years later Fouché told Philippe de Ségur that he had warned him: "If I find you at the head of the thing, when I deal with your Club, I'll have you executed. I give you my word on that, and I shall keep it."

On August 15th, Fouché, former President of the Jacobins Club, paid an official visit in person to the rue du Bac and heard the kind of speeches that were so familiar to him, since he had made them himself when he was a terrorist. The future Duke of Otranto heard himself denounced by Lepelletier, and listened to the argument that an attack on the popular Societies was an attack on democracy. Unimpressed, he informed the members that the Club was hereby dissolved. Too dumbfounded to make any effective reply, they filed out, the doors were sealed up, and Fouché returned to the Luxembourg to hand over the keys to the incredulous Directors. In this simple fashion the chief obstacle to the plans of Sieyès was disposed of. Before leaving, Fouché pointed out how necessary it was to represent what had

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occurred as of no particular significance, in order to avoid rousing hopes among the royalists. Next day, on his advice, the Directors rejected a petition for the return of the proscribed royalists and deported priests of Fructidor. He was already reminding them not to abandon the old see-saw politics. He knew what was stirring in the departments of the West and the South.

#### IV

Sieyès had been working hard, as secretly as possible, and the broad lines of his plan were emerging. He was grouping round him all those upon whom he could rely, and was in correspondence with Lafayette in Germany, with Carnot in Holland, with the brothers Lameth and Latour-Maubourg, sounding them all and getting their opinions. It was already clear that he would have to rely on the Ancients to give the initial impetus to his conspiracy, and that the Five Hundred would have to be dealt with summarily. There would be no hope of persuading them to come to terms with him. He had frequent meetings with Talleyrand, Fouché, Roederer, and with deputies like Baudin, Régnier, Réal. The majority of the Institute favoured his ideas, and the brothers Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte were ready to support him for reasons of their own. The Army would follow the victorious Joubert, but would not be called upon until the last moment, when it was clear that only the Jacobins stood between France and her desire for stable government—and then, probably, only to intimidate. There was to be no question of seizing power by a military coup. If the operation could not be performed legally, it must be performed with as little illegality as possible. Also, it must be swift and sure. The universal opinion among intelligent people was that the present state of affairs could endure only a very little longer. The news from the armies was still bad and, after the closing of their Club, the Jacobins fastened on this as their last hope. Unless Sieyès and his friends acted soon, one of two things would happen: Either the Jacobins would succeed in wrecking the country and destroying the Revolution, or the royalists would have their conspiracy ready first, and the Bourbons

would come back. Either way, it would be the end of Sieyès, Fouché, Talleyrand. Sieyès could congratulate himself on striking the first blow. August 15th was the prelude to Brumaire. Unfortunately something else occurred on August 15th which upset his plans and filled his group with dismay.

Joubert, on arriving in Italy on August 4th, found himself in command of a dispirited army of 40,000 men. After the Trebbia, Macdonald's beaten force had straggled back across the mountains to Genoa, and had there joined Moreau's men. The soldiers were thoroughly demoralized, and to the bitterness of defeat were added the usual grievances of the time: lack of pay, bad food, insufficient clothing and equipment. With the half-mad Suvorov still advancing, they were the only barrier to the invasion of France through the Ligurian hills and Nice, if he cared to disregard Masséna and the Army of Switzerland. Joubert put what heart he could into his men. A volunteer in '91, he had risen to the rank of General by '95. "A grenadier for courage, a General for coolness and military talent," was Bonaparte's opinion of him. He was a man of the right military temperament for the work in hand—Madelin has compared him with that other splendid leader of men who died young, Marceau. Joubert, then, allowing himself a bare ten days to organize his command, attacked Suvorov's 70,000 men with his 40,000 at Novi on August 15th. In the first hour of the fighting he was killed. Moreau stepped into the breach and conducted a masterly retreat for sixteen hours. But all Italy was lost save Genoa, and the frontier was open.

To Paris came news of the defeat and of the landing in the Low Countries of English and Russian troops, where Brune had but 20,000 men to oppose 40,000. Masséna had held the Archduke Charles on the far side of the Rhine, using Switzerland as a gigantic bastion, but it seemed obvious now that Suvorov would either invade France or join the Archduke and overwhelm Masséna. North, South, and East the frontiers were threatened. There was deep consternation in Paris, and in conversation the name of Bonaparte was heard again. For many believed that he would return, but none knew how or when, with England in command of the seas. His prestige had increased, both by the bulletins of his victories and by the impact on men's imagination of this astonish-

ing march eastwards. The defeats and failures of the expedition were glossed over, and then news of him ceased altogether for four months. Occasionally a rumour that he had landed in France sent the crowds rushing into the streets. Sometimes a suggestion was made that he should be recalled, but it had always been dismissed. But Sieyès had not lost heart. He had conducted his campaign with much vigour, and had surprised those who had not suspected him of any talent for practical affairs. Joseph Bonaparte offered to try to get an emissary to Bonaparte. Talleyrand had a scheme for negotiating with the Turks, through Spain, for the return of the French forces. But nothing came of either scheme. Other Generals were considered by Sieyès, to replace Joubert—Macdonald, who refused; Moreau, who was appointed to command the Army of the Rhine, and could come to Paris first.

As worse and worse news came in—Brune beaten by the Duke of York, and the Belgian provinces in revolt—the Jacobins became more violent in their attacks on the Directory. Fouché struck again. The most dangerous of the opposition papers were closed down, and at once the Jacobins cried that Sieyès was about to invite Orleans or Brunswick to become King of France. They were now convinced that there was a connexion between the royalist risings in the West and South, the mysterious comings and goings of Sieyès, and his friends, and the determination of Fouché to muzzle all criticism of the Directory. They decided that if there was to be a *coup d'état*, it should be theirs. Jourdan sounded Bernadotte. Would he, with the garrison troops at his orders and only the foolish Lefebvre to be won over, arrest Sieyès, Barras and Ducos, and set up a Government with himself as its leader? But Bernadotte was by temperament only half a Gascon. He would boast and swagger and threaten by the hour, but his energy was verbal. He looked the part of any Gascon swordsman in any historical novel, and he had fierce gestures to match fierce words. But when it came to making a decision which involved a risk, for all his restless ambition, he was unable to act. He became ludicrous, cursing and roaring all the louder, as his will weakened. Anyhow, he failed the Jacobins, and they had to fall back on Parliamentary action, putting into their last rally all the weight they could muster.



When General Jourdan in the Five Hundred moved that the country be declared in danger, a free fight broke out. For this was a challenge which everyone could understand; an invitation to decree the Terror and to let loose on Paris the type of man who had urged on the September massacres. And when the news of what had been suggested by Jourdan came to the Directors, the first startling fact which forced itself into the minds of three of them was that Bernadotte the Jacobin was still Minister of War. If he, with Jourdan and Augereau, were to place himself at the head of any organized movement, resistance would be impossible. Yet, if he were dismissed in any sensational manner, it would make matters worse. When the situation was discussed at the Luxembourg, Gohier and Moulin, hitherto so quiet, showed a touch of that obstinacy which was to prove so troublesome later on. Ducos and Barras, of course, agreed that Bernadotte must go, and that made a majority, but an uneasy majority for such a matter as this. It was finally decided to trick the Gascon out of office by using his own words against him. With such a prodigious talker, never noted for his discretion, it was not difficult to set the trap. It appeared that he had on at least one occasion, in the presence of the Directors, said that he didn't much care for his post, and that anybody could have it for the asking. This was now brought up against him, and the three Directors made known to him by letter that they were ready to accede to his request to be relieved of his post. When it came to the question of a successor, Gohier and Moulin again made trouble, and to please them the able Dubois-Crancé, a regicide, was appointed.

The Jacobins were determined to get their decree through, and they tried to assemble the people of the faubourgs. It was a dismal failure. In the Five Hundred there was another noisy session, and, while the issue was still undecided, word went round that Bernadotte was no longer at the War Ministry. This was taken as a signal from the Directors to their sympathizers that their plot was about to be put into action. But, for all that, the motion was defeated. It was a victory of a sort for the hard-pressed Directory, but it was not possible to follow it up. Sieyès had not found his Sword. And the Jacobins, having lost theirs, could only hope to ward off the blow which they knew was being prepared.

## THE LAST ATTEMPT OF THE JACOBINS

There was a short lull, during which both parties watched each other closely, and the people sank deeper into despair. Sieyès did not expect much from Moreau, whose arrival he was awaiting. It was agreed among the Directors that a letter should be sent to Egypt recalling Bonaparte and his army to France. It was unlikely that the letter would ever reach him, or, if it reached him, that he could avoid the English fleet. And even if he achieved that miracle, he could hardly be in time to save France. However, on September 18th, the letter was sent.

Bonaparte had sailed on August 23rd.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *The Defeat of the Second Coalition : Bonaparte Returns from Egypt : The Conspiracy*

#### I

IN August, 1799, the French had about 170,000 men to protect their frontiers against something over 300,000 Russians, Austrians, and English. But France was to owe her salvation not to the genius of Masséna alone. The new Coalition appeared to have everything in its favour, including the uprising of the Italian Republics, of the Swiss cantons, and of the Low Countries. But in reality, it was subject to the same disease as the First Coalition. Its movements were strangled by internal rivalries, and its rulers had in common one object alone—the dismemberment of France. There was no need even of the pretext used by its predecessor—the restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy. A glance at the conditions in which this Coalition had come into being will explain its lack of cohesion.

French diplomacy had achieved nothing. The mission of Sieyès to Berlin in 1798 was a failure. Frederick-William III and Haugwitz were determined not to be dragged into the war until they were quite certain they would get something out of it, and the best that could be said, from the French point of view, was that they resisted the persuasions of the Czar Paul I with equal stubbornness. Russia herself had long hesitated, but the capture of Malta and the destruction of the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile emboldened the Czar. The revolt of the Neapolitans encouraged him further, and England saw her chance to redouble her efforts. The English ambassador, Lord Whitworth, offered £75,000 per month for 45,000 Russian troops, and £225,000 down as soon as the campaign began. The deal was closed, and soon after the Turks joined the Coalition. England then turned to Austria, but there was considerable haggling about the price. All the Franco-Austrian negotiations had failed because the

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Austrians would consider nothing but the evacuation of the Low Countries by the French, but in spite of this the Czar suspected a Franco-Austrian understanding. The Austrians were afraid that Russia would interfere with Italy, and that England would give Belgium to Prussia. England offered Prussia a million sterling to join the Coalition, but the King was too timid and Prussia remained neutral. So the position in August was that the Coalition had marched, but that every member of it distrusted every other member. English money was the cement that held it together.

Austria had watched the campaign of Suvorov in Italy with alarm. His too active encouragement of insurrection was against the Emperor's political ideas, and was upsetting his plans for a restoration of the old methods of government. Further, the personality and the temperament of this eccentric fanatic were repulsive to the Austrians. Suvorov was now seventy years of age, but he had lost none of the ferocity which had made his name accursed in Bessarabia, as the butcher of Ismail, and in Poland, as the tyrant of Warsaw. He brought his technique of massacre and assassination into Italy. "Half demon and half dirt," Byron called him in *Don Juan*. It was an understatement. He was three-quarters demon. It was not long before the hostility between Austria and Russia was endangering the Coalition, and Pitt, as paymaster to the forces, had to step in with a plan for separating them and at the same time getting on with the main object of the war. This was not the liberation of Italy, but the invasion of France. The new plan was an ambitious one, but it had the great merit of settling the Austro-Russian dispute. The Austrians in Italy were to push ahead and cross the French frontier in Savoy. The Anglo-Russians would disembark on the Dutch coasts, and the Archduke Charles with his Austrians would march northwards to Mayence and cross the Lower Rhine. Most important of all, Suvorov would cross the St. Gothard to join the Austro-Russian forces under Korsakov and Hotze in and round Zurich. They would invade France by the Franche-Comté, having overwhelmed Masséna.

Brune, who had been Danton's friend, took the first shock, in Holland. He was not a great general and he had only 20,000 men,

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17,000 of them French, with which to oppose the incompetent Duke of York and his 40,000. The Dutch fleet surrendered. The crews deserted to the Allies. Brune attacked and won two victories, Bergen and Kastricum. The Duke of York signed an agreement in Alkmaar, and the evacuation of the Russians and English followed. One frontier was safe. But the new plan of campaign had made the Prussians more inclined to take part in what looked like decisive events. Frederick-William III sent troops towards the Lower Rhine, to be on the spot when the Archduke Charles arrived.

All depended now upon that dogged, that magnificent soldier Masséna, who had held the Archduke so firmly in Switzerland, while at the same time remaining a permanent threat to the communications of any Austrian or Russian army rash enough to enter France. Masséna had under him generals whose names speak for themselves: Oudinot, as Chief-of-Staff, Lecomte, Souham, Vandamme, Drouet d'Erlon, Ney, Soult, Mortier. The Army was posted in a semi-circle from Basle to the Simplon. Through September, the month of the founding of the Republic, Masséna waited, watching for his moment. Korsakov in Zurich was the chief danger. And Suvorov was coming up the St. Gothard from Bellinzona to join forces with him. Masséna planned to let him get just near enough, but not too near. His formidable patience was misunderstood by the Directors in Paris, who could not see what he was up to. The War Ministry sent repeated and urgent messages. Then, at the right moment, Masséna struck. Carrying boats in the darkness his men crossed the Limat. Zurich was taken and Korsakov routed. On the same day Soult defeated and routed Hotze. So that, when Suvorov finally came over the St. Gothard, he was met with news of the defeat of his colleagues, and found Masséna's army ready for him. He fought savagely, but was thrown back, and managed to extricate a remnant of his 24,000 men and to lead them, by a chaos of rocks and wild valleys, into the Grisons. It was a complete defeat, and it brought disgrace on Suvorov, made the enraged Czar desert the Coalition, and once more saved the Republic—for the moment.

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### II

News of Bergen, the first of the victories, came to Paris on September 22nd. The courier arrived just as the Directors were setting out for the ceremony of the founding of the Republic on the Champ-de-Mars. Gohier had that day entered on his three months' Presidency. Kastricum followed, and Masséna's victories, and then despatches from Egypt announcing Bonaparte's defeat of the Turks and the capture of Aboukir. Flags and trophies arrived from Switzerland and from Holland and were presented at the Luxembourg. But the most astounding news was to come last, as though the gods had decided that men's minds must be prepared to receive it. The sudden explosion of victories reverberated from end to end of France, and then there was a silence. It appeared that, in spite of the enthusiasm of the two Chambers and their praise of Brune and Masséna and the Armies, people had been thinking of a greater name when the news of Aboukir came. So that now it seemed that it was to Egypt they turned their eyes in hope. Neither Brune nor Masséna fired their imaginations, and it was not through them that peace and order could be re-established in France. The Egyptian victories seemed to bring nearer the man of whom so many had said, with fervour : " He will return." On October 14th, what had so often been repeated as a rumour, was cried in the streets of Paris : " Bonaparte is in France ! Bonaparte has landed at Fréjus ! Bonaparte has come back ! "

On this same day Moreau had arrived from Italy, where the Austrians were still held, and Sieyès had sent for him to impress upon him the necessity for overthrowing the Government as soon as possible. The series of victories had quietened the Jacobins for a while, but they were in no mood to attribute them to the Directory, and even accused the Directors of exaggerating the good news for political motives. Sieyès was determined to sweep aside the tiresome scruples and hesitations of Moreau and to persuade him to be the Sword, so long sought. He was waiting for Moreau when the news was brought to him that Bonaparte had landed. He sent for Baudin, a friend who was in the conspiracy.

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He and Moreau arrived together, and were told the news. "There's the man you want," said Moreau; "he will do your work much better than I could." Baudin went away, almost frantic with delight, and the next morning died suddenly. The story is that he died of joy. Gohier was entertaining Josephine to dinner when the news came. He was not pleased. She tried to reassure him as to her husband's intentions, and announced that she must get to him before his brothers poisoned his mind with tales about her.

The startling news was a shock to the Directors. They were under no illusions as to what popular feeling would be when Bonaparte's arrival was known. They had hoped, as usual, that the victories would bring them credit. Gohier and Moulin saw that, whatever happened, the Jacobins, disarmed by the good news, would have the country more than ever against them. Sieyès was not foolish enough to imagine that he could use such a man as Bonaparte as an instrument and then discard him. In announcing the arrival to the Five Hundred, the Directors framed their message with a small-mindedness that would be annoying were it not so amusing. It was a lengthy message, which concluded with news from the army of Egypt. General Berthier had landed at Fréjus, with Generals Bonaparte, Lannes, Marmont, Murat, Andréossy, and the citizens Monge and Berthollet. The attempt to minimize the importance of the news by putting Berthier first was a miserable failure. The enthusiasm of the Chamber made anything but patriotic orations and revolutionary songs impossible, and the session was closed, in order that the deputies might go into the streets to mingle with the delirious crowds.

## III

Bonaparte in Egypt had received, at long intervals, scanty news from France, and all of it bad. He had offered to return when he heard of the campaign of the Coalition and the impotence of the Directory, but the Directors had not encouraged him. What finally decided him was a gift of newspapers to one of his

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officers, who had met a cousin of Sidney Smith during the negotiations for an exchange of prisoners. These newspapers gave Bonaparte his first news of Jourdan's defeat at Stockach and the loss of Italy. He made up his mind that his hour had come. Admiral Ganteaume in Alexandria was ordered to arm two frigates and two sloops and to study the best means of making the hazardous voyage, which would last two months at least, with the English fleet on the watch all the time. Bonaparte's mystic belief in his star was about to be put to a severe test. When Ganteaume informed him that most of the English ships which would normally be lying off Alexandria had put into Rhodes and Cyprus for water and food, he saw his chance. The story was spread that he was going to Damietta from Cairo, where he then was, to study a project in connexion with the Nile Delta. When the expedition set out, at midnight, only Bourrienne and Eugène knew what was in the wind. But at Rosetta all pretence was discarded. He told Menou he was going to France to kick out the crowd of lawyers who were incapable of government, and on August 22nd he boarded the *Muiron*, leaving his abandoned army in charge of Kléber, and sparing himself the spectacle of the rage and mortification of his troops, who held themselves betrayed.

The party embarked in the dark of night on the two frigates, *Muiron* and *Carrère*, with the sloops *Revanche* and *Fortune* in attendance. The plan was to get under the lee of the Tripolitanian coastline as soon as possible and to hug it for as long as possible, in order to escape interception. But adverse winds continued so long that there was a suggestion of putting back into Alexandria. Bonaparte would have none of it. The wind veered, and they were at last able to carry out the plan. By day Bonaparte, who could never be idle, made himself familiar with the routine and management of the ship, or discussed mathematical problems with Monge. By night he exercised his talent for telling ghost-stories, or played vingt-et-un with one of his Generals, frequently cheating as was his habit. An interesting explanation of this childish habit is given by Bourrienne. Nobody objected to it, because Bonaparte always returned any money he won by trickery. He expected an ace to turn up when he needed it, because he had complete confidence in his star, either at the card-table or on the battlefield.



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If the ace did not turn up, he took good care that nobody should know that he had been disappointed. Therefore he cheated. Similarly, if he won a game of chess, he would not play a second, for fear of losing it and appearing to be deserted by fortune.

They came in sight of Corsica after more than a month at sea. Bonaparte had no intention of landing, but the wind blew from the west again and the ships were forced to put into Ajaccio, where a dead calm held them for seven days. Here they had the news of the defeat at Novi and the death of Joubert. Bonaparte revisited his old home, numerous relatives and friends, including his old nurse Camilla Ilari, and had to receive magistrates and make speeches to them. The delay infuriated him. He fully appreciated his luck in escaping the English for so long, but he knew that it was time he was in France. But luck was needed just as much for the last stage of the journey. The first day out from Ajaccio passed uneventfully, but on the second day, at sunset, with the French shore in sight, they nearly ran into an English squadron. They were seen, but the future Duc de Rovigo was told later by English naval officers that the Admiral took them, in the failing light, for part of his squadron, especially as they were coming towards him, making for Toulon. Ganteaume, in a state of alarm, wanted to put back to Corsica, but Bonaparte ordered him to set a course for some more easterly part of the French coast, since Toulon was blocked by the English ships. So, anxiously, they sailed on, and when the morning came there was no sign of an English ship. They entered the bay of St. Raphael and dropped anchor.

Even now, as though every incident in this man's history must be dramatic, the adventure might have miscarried. Every ship coming from the East had to submit to the quarantine regulations. But no sooner had the *Muiron* dropped anchor than word ran through the coastal villages that Bonaparte had returned to France. Then every man who could find a boat or an oar came tumbling down to the water's edge. The bay was soon covered with craft of all sizes and descriptions, and voices were crying Bonaparte's name and demanding to see him. They clambered on board the *Muiron* and, when told the risks they were running, they replied: "We prefer the plague to the Austrians." The

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authorities realized that, whatever germs were on board had now been passed on, and that it was no use trying to put Bonaparte in quarantine. Moreover, had they tried to carry out their instructions, the populace would have had something to say. So the party came ashore at St. Raphael, and the strange medley of Generals, learned men, and Mamelukes took the road to Fréjus and Draguignan, acclaimed by the peasants of Var.

### IV

The journey across Southern and Central France to Paris could have been a triumphal procession if Bonaparte had played the part which was thrust upon him. It is doubtful if there has ever been such a universal outburst of popular joy as that which ran like a fire before him as his name passed from lip to lip. The towns were illuminated by night, the bands played, addresses of welcome were showered on him. The people danced in the streets, sang, kissed each other, wept. From village to village torchlight processions went before and after him. Deserters rejoined their regiments, conscripts came out of hiding. By day he passed through hamlets beflagged in his honour, and heard his name blessed as he passed beneath windows hung with tricolour ribbons. France was rising to offer itself to him. Some were dazzled by his glory, others saw in him the herald of peace and the architect of that ordered government which the Republic had never had. But all waited on his word. And that inflamed orator of the Midi who cried, "Go General, and defeat the enemy, and we will make you King," was no lonely voice. Men of all parties, with the exception of the royalists, greeted him as the one man who could now save France, and the common people welcomed him as a hope fulfilled. By yielding to them, by a romantic flourish of his sword, by delivering those orations which, with their blend of poetry and lapidary prose, bound his soldiers so closely to him, he could have done anything with them. He already knew men's hearts, how to read them, and how to move them. But, as after Campo-Formio, he withheld himself. Now and then he permitted himself an angry criticism of the Directors, but he gave nobody

any encouragement to think that he was prepared to seize power. His sombre, pensive air was noticed, and he avoided all unnecessary delays, pushing on in his customary manner as fast as his horses could take him. Far from disappointing the people, his apparent modesty increased their delight. He may have calculated this, following a deliberate policy of being carried to power without seeking it. But there were other reasons for his grave demeanour.

First of all, the strength and warmth of the welcome must have surprised him. He had made up his mind long ago that his destiny called him to finish and found the Revolution and to remake France. But he had also decided that power should come to him not by some sudden act of violence which depended on the support of one faction or another, but that it should come to him in a legal manner. And if that was impossible, and the law must be broken, he would be no usurper but the choice of all parties, of the nation, of a people insisting on the sweeping away of a Government which, in any case, had only kept itself in power by breaking the law, as he reminded them later. He was a young man, just past his twenty-ninth birthday, and, seeing the mood of the people and knowing the universal disgust with the Government, he must have realized that power was his for the asking, in any way he cared to take it. To a man so young and of such achievement already, the temptation to abandon caution and patience must have been a strong one. But his will was capable of protecting him from such temptations. It was nearly three years since, in the Italian gardens of Montebello, he had opened his mind to a friend and had said that the time was not ripe for him to carry out his plans. When he came to Paris after Campo-Formio, he still judged that his hour had not come. But now he saw the effect of his arrival, and the thought of the work that lay before him made him solemn when he was expected to be gay.

But he had another reason for his sombre mood. Josephine was not the kind of wife to endure separation from her husband for any length of time, and a few weeks after her farewell to Bonaparte at Toulon, she was writing to Barras from Plombières in the Vosges exactly the kind of letter one would expect her to write: a pathetic appeal from a neglected wife, who has had no news of her husband and is alarmed at the hostility of her husband's

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family. It was perfectly true that the Bonapartes disliked her, but it was her indiscretions which provided the material for their ill-natured gossip. If she had behaved herself, Joseph would have had nothing to write to Bonaparte about. She informed Barras that Bonaparte wanted her to join him and that she had every intention of doing so as soon as possible—and, in the same letter, invited her old lover to come to her at Plombières. At the same time she was living openly with the silly fop Charles. Joseph informed his brother of what was going on. As he still loved Josephine, Bonaparte probably tried to persuade himself that there was nothing but malice in the stories. A conversation with Junot finally convinced him that Joseph's information was correct and, from that moment, the idea of a divorce came into Bonaparte's mind. His letter to Joseph about his disgust with human nature is well known.

In his anger and humiliation Bonaparte had attempted to find consolation with the wife of one of his cavalry officers, the trivial little milliner, Pauline Fourès, or Bellisle (for she reverted to her maiden name on becoming Bonaparte's mistress). She was a fugitive amusement, and the soldiers called her "Bellilote, our Generaless."

For these reasons Bonaparte passed in haste, and with pre-occupied looks, through the thronged streets of towns, and along crowded country roads, giving no hint of his intentions, anxious only to reach the capital. On the morning of October 16th, while he was still thought to be in the Nivernais, he slipped into Paris—and found the house empty. He waited all day and, in the evening, paid a visit to President Gohier at the Luxembourg, taking Monge with him. Monge, perhaps in complete simplicity, perhaps with a mischievous sense of humour, said to Gohier: "How delighted I am to find the Republic triumphant on our return." Gohier says—but it is well to remember that he was his enemy—that Bonaparte added his congratulations, but looked embarrassed.

On hearing of Bonaparte's return Josephine had realized that there was only one thing to do—to intercept him before his brothers could get to him. She must tell the story of her follies and misdeeds before they could tell it. She therefore set out at once,

and took the road through Burgundy to Lyons. But Bonaparte, as impatient as she was, and for a different reason, had gone through the Bourbonnais after leaving Lyons, and they missed each other. Joseph, Lucien, and Louis had also set out the moment the news came, determined to settle the matter once and for all. Louis fell sick at Autun, but the others met their brother and gave him the full account of his wife's love affairs, her debts, her attempt to marry Hortense to Reubell's son. They used all their eloquence, and they may have thought that they had succeeded. Certainly, it was not Josephine's immorality which inflamed them. It was the prospect of their brother assuming power, with the Beauharnais family still there to prevent his own family from monopolizing his favours. They had seen, with disapproval, Eugène accompany their brother to Egypt as his aide-de-camp, and they resented the fact that it was Josephine who would be beside him as he climbed to higher power. He, Bonaparte, needed no encouragement to rail against her, but what he did not know, until he saw her before him once more, was that he still loved her.

Naturally enough, he was not favourably impressed by the story of her having taken the wrong road. His rage increased as the hours passed, and when Josephine finally arrived, he refused to see her. He shut himself up in his study, and, when she knocked on the door, and implored him to listen to her explanations, he took no notice. She wept and cried out and beat the door, but in vain. And then she remembered his affection for her children. She was well aware that she had dishonoured him, but she knew that there came a point where he could not resist an appeal to his heart. He was accustomed to say that tears were the most powerful weapon a woman possessed—adding, in one of his more brutal moments—"and paint." He had resisted her tears, but there was still Hortense. She went and awakened Hortense and Eugène, told them how matters stood, and sent them into the battle that she seemed to have lost. Their pleadings broke down his resistance and, after a while, he sent them for their mother. The door opened and she flung herself into his arms. The reconciliation appeared to be complete, but he had learned his lesson and never forgot it.

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### V

Paris had received, on the evening of October 13th, a rumour of the landing. Next day it was confirmed, and the people went out to celebrate the event. In every quarter of the capital strangers accosted each other with the news. The Palais Royal was as tumultuous as on the day when Camille Desmoulins jumped on to his table and addressed the crowd. In the suburbs the workmen marched up and down singing, in the taverns men drank the health of Bonaparte, come home at last to bring peace. The bands of the garrison regiments paraded, and the people surged about them, cheering and throwing up their hats. Beside the little drummer boys, men, women, and children fell into step and marched wherever the music led them. There were wild scenes in the theatres, where the actors were interrupted. And across Paris, from Saint-Denis to Saint-Marcel, and from Saint-Antoine to Chaillot, one name was repeated like the name of a god. People neglected whatever they were doing and ran out to join the roaring masses which eddied and swirled aimlessly on the boulevards. Young Béranger went into a reading-room, where there were thirty men studying the newspapers. Outside in the street someone shouted: "Bonaparte is returned!" and every one of those thirty men rose with a cry of joy.<sup>1</sup>

It was against this background that the Directory found itself concerned with a difficult problem. The Directors had written to Bonaparte, telling him to return with his Army. He had returned alone. In other words, a Commander-in-Chief had deserted his army. He had also failed to comply with the quarantine law. It did not take them long to decide to overlook both these irregularities. If anybody was tempted to hesitate, the voices in the street clinched the argument; especially as the closing of the Jacobins Club had won the Directors a little praise, and the victories of Brune and Masséna averted many eyes momentarily from the internal situation. Sieyès might have hoped that the victories which had saved the Republic from invasion would

\* <sup>1</sup> Thiébauld, in his *Memoirs* (Vol. II, Ch. II), describes what he saw in Paris on October 14th.

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make the return of Bonaparte something of an anti-climax. If he had any such idea, he was soon disabused. The victories were valued by the people, but they now seemed no more than a prelude to the great and final victory which Bonaparte would give them.

On October 17th he paid his formal visit to the Directors in the Luxembourg, and he certainly could not be accused of trying to exaggerate his own importance. The friendliness of his reception may have been largely due to the fact that he seemed so harmless—a thin, weary youngster, dressed anyhow, in military boots with civilian coat and breeches and hat, and a silk sash from which hung a Turkish sabre. When this grotesque figure appeared outside the Palace, the guard turned out and presented arms. The heavy Gohier tried to be cordial. Sieyès was as remote as usual, Barras as cheerfully amicable as usual. Ducos and Moulin were as unobtrusive as the furniture. They welcomed him and he made a short speech in reply, disclaiming any inordinate ambitions. When he went back to his house the crowds mobbed him.

## VI

The immediate question now for politicians, Generals, Ministers, journalists, was—what were Bonaparte's intentions? Sieyès had little to add to his plan. It was sure of support from some of the most influential members of the Ancients—Régnier, Cornet, Cornudet, Lemercier, Fargues. And in the Five Hundred he could count on Lucien Bonaparte, who, at the age of twenty-four was soon to be elected President, on Boulay de la Meurthe, Chazal, Gaudin, Cabanis, Chénier. But Sieyès knew no more than anybody else what Bonaparte was going to do and was inclined to suspect him of plotting with Barras. Bonaparte himself gave no help. He appeared rarely in public, but received, with scrupulous impartiality, visitors from every group and faction, each of whom was anxious to use him to overthrow the Government in their own interests. The Jacobins were hopeful of claiming him as a Jacobin, the moderate Republicans told themselves that he was a strong Republican, the royalists knew that he had a weakness for the manners and the general atmosphere of the

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old régime, the intellectuals of the Institute had evidence of his pleasure in their society, and dreamed of a Republic to which they would give the tone. But only Sieyès had a scheme ready, and he was distrustful, and knew that, for all that he had flattered him, Bonaparte did not like him, regarding him as a sack of theories.

Bonaparte, I have said, was determined not to be the nominee of a party. But, obviously, he would have to make use of a party. And he soon realized that the men who were in the confidence of Sieyès, and were constantly urging a meeting between him and Bonaparte, were what might be called Moderates. They were the advocates of a stroke to get rid of the Government but not a military stroke; nor would they have Jacobin methods. Their aim was not the destruction of the Republic, but its establishment on a firm basis, so that what France had gained from the Revolution might be saved in time. They wanted, most of them, no dictator, but many of them would have had no objection, at some hour in the future, to a constitutional Monarchy. They were intelligent enough to realize that Bonaparte had shown high qualities as an administrator, and they knew the power of his name in France. It seemed to them that Sieyès had found his Sword, and something more. In this party there were, of course, those who were working in their own interests alone, or who joined it to be on the successful side. But there was a fine core of pure Republicanism, of writers and scientists and professors, who hailed Bonaparte as the symbol of the Republic. Among the adventurers and the careerists were some who spun their webs in the dark. Barras need not detain us, since he, as usual, was waiting to sell himself once more to the highest bidder, and as the return of Bonaparte upset all ideas of a Bourbon restoration, he hoped that the victorious soldier would find room for him in his schemes. He could flatter himself that he was an old friend, who had done Bonaparte one or two services. In fact, he regarded himself as, in some sense, his patron. But Talleyrand and Fouché played a far more complicated game. Barras no longer cared for power. He wanted only money. Talleyrand and Fouché hungered not only for power and money, but they loved, for itself, every move in the slow chess-board play of intrigue and counter-intrigue, every detail in the intricate



chicaneries by which men are deceived and captured in politics. The object of both now, as always, was to be on the winning side after the event, but to establish friendships and connexions in all parties which would serve against any sudden and unexpected development or change<sup>1</sup>. Both of them knew that Bonaparte was the coming man, but both had to go warily, in order to avoid compromising themselves. They had always to be ready to adjust themselves to new circumstances at short notice, and, if Brumaire had failed, one thing at any rate can be stated with certainty: Talleyrand might have had to disappear again for a while, but Fouché would have emerged as the leader of the Jacobins.

Talleyrand approved of the scheme of Sieyès, and was willing to join the conspiracy. He had no love for Sieyès, but a sincere admiration for his brain. The personality of the man was displeasing to him. He said he had a cowardly soul and that his inflexibility was only in his head. However, he joined the conspiracy, but not in the direct manner which those words imply. For Talleyrand's idea of joining a conspiracy was to get to know the secrets of everybody involved, to be, at least outwardly, friendly with the principal conspirators, to make himself indispensable to them all—but never to give either his loyalty or his confidence too completely. Being incapable of generous enthusiasm, he would never burn his boats; and, to make doubly sure, he would always leave a bridge also for his retreat. He would have agreed with Fouché that if you know a man's secrets you have a useful hold over him. His pose of indifference to what was going on round him, his nauseating suavity, cloaked an incessant activity, carried on by agents. He moved about with the air of an old nobleman, never happier than when entertaining great ladies with his malicious wit, and giving the impression of a gentleman whose only business is a refined and sophisticated employment of unlimited leisure, yet no police spy was more preoccupied with daily affairs. It was his present task to bring Bonaparte and Sieyès together. And to do this he had to convince Bonaparte, who was inclined to work with Barras, that the rumours of the Abbé's

<sup>1</sup> It was easy for Fouché to find out anything the conspirators did not want to tell him. Whatever Talleyrand knew, would be told to Chénier, who had got his name removed from the list of émigrés. Daunou, Fouché's lifelong friend, knew all that Chénier knew.

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intrigues with the Orleanists were exaggerated. But it is not by any means sure that Talleyrand himself was not involved in this same business.

Fouché, like Talleyrand, had seen that Bonaparte was the coming force in French affairs. His vigorous action against the Jacobins had made him a man to be reckoned with, and he lost no time in gaining a hold over Josephine. As he was happily married, there was no question of becoming her lover. Instead, he supplied the extravagant woman with money. At the same time he was very friendly to Lucien and Joseph, thus digging himself into the family of the man whose career he was watching with so much interest. He decided that his own interests would best be served by being in the very heart of the conspiracy without taking any active part in it—not even the active part which Talleyrand took behind the scenes<sup>1</sup>. As Minister of Police he was in an excellent position to play his game. Knowing everything, he would give nothing away. In other words, he who could do so much to wreck the affair would permit its accomplishment; or, at the least, would not take action against it unless it failed. It very nearly failed, and Fouché was ready to change sides at the last moment<sup>2</sup>. He had a more difficult task than Talleyrand, whom Bonaparte knew and of whose usefulness he was well aware. Fouché he had never met. He knew him by reputation as one of the most unsavoury agents of the Terror, and was not inclined to have anything to do with him. When Fouché finally made his call on Bonaparte, he was kept waiting like any unimportant visitor, but Bonaparte soon recognized his talents.

During the first few days after Bonaparte's return, precious time was wasted. He, remaining for the most part in his house, was the centre of a thousand intrigues. Fouché, close friend of Barras, was in favour of Bonaparte working with the latter, and

<sup>1</sup> Talleyrand, in August '99, had suggested (using Sainte-Foy as his emissary) to the Prussian Minister Sandoz-Rollin, that hereditary monarchy should be restored in France, in the person of a Hohenzollern Prince. (See Lacour-Gayet: *Talleyrand*, Vol. I, Ch. 20).

<sup>2</sup> In his *Memoirs* Fouché says frankly that the conspiracy would have failed, if he had opposed it, "But it would have been folly on my part not to prefer a future to no future at all." For a full discussion of the authenticity of the *Memoirs*, the reader is referred to the latest edition (*Flammarion*, 1945) with an introduction and notes by M. Louis Madelin.

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it seemed that this was what was going to happen. But Bonaparte soon discovered the hopeless corruption of Barras, and, while remaining friendly in order to put him off his guard, determined that it was with Sieyès he must work. In this decision he was opposed by Josephine, but heartily supported by Talleyrand, Roederer, and his brothers. And it was high time the decision was made. The Jacobins had grown suspicious that something was afoot. All Paris was asking what were Bonaparte's intentions, and it was known widely that Sieyès was plotting. At any moment there might be another Jacobin outburst, and that would mean the intervention of the troops, and Bonaparte either missing his chance or seizing power, like any other tryant, with the help of a faction.

A few days after Bonaparte arrived in Paris the name of Pierre Louis Roederer of Metz was mentioned to him. He remembered having met Roederer at a dinner given by Talleyrand two months before the departure for Egypt. At this dinner Bonaparte had complimented Roederer on an article he had written in the *Journal de Paris*. Laplace the astronomer and Prony the mathematician were present, and a long philosophical discussion had followed. Now hearing that Roederer, who had played a considerable part in the Revolution, would be a valuable supporter of the conspiracy, Regnault brought him to the rue de la Victoire and at once Roederer approved of Bonaparte's ideas. Bonaparte asked him whether he did not think that there were great difficulties to be overcome. Roederer replied that, on the contrary, he regarded the affair as almost achieved already.

## VII

It was necessary for the success of the conspiracy that very few people should be admitted to the secret meetings. And a good deal of time was wasted before even the two chief conspirators met. Neither Bonaparte nor Sieyès was inclined to make the first move towards a formal alliance. Bonaparte despised and disliked Sieyès. Sieyès distrusted and feared Bonaparte. Their characters and temperaments were so completely opposed

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that there seemed little hope that they could ever work together. The victorious General was unwilling to come to the Director with an offer of his services, the maker of Constitutions was equally unwilling to seek out the General and ask him for his help. Yet each knew that the active support of the other was essential to the success of the enterprise. A ludicrous comedy followed. Bonaparte, eager for action, dismissed his personal feelings, and sent an aide-de-camp to Sieyès, with word that he himself would call upon the Director next day at a stated hour. But when the aide arrived at the Luxembourg, Sieyès was out. On his return, wishing to make the most of his petty triumph, Sieyès sent Lucien to tell Bonaparte that the hour mentioned was not convenient, as he had a meeting to attend. When Lucien delivered the message, Bonaparte was in the midst of his Generals. To save his dignity, he denied that he had sent a messenger to Sieyès and said that it was not his custom to visit people. They must visit him. Talleyrand hurried to the rue de la Victoire to repair the damage and succeeded in persuading Bonaparte to try again. Meanwhile to Roederer fell the task of soothing Sieyès. But it was only some ten days before the *coup d'état* that Bonaparte made his call on Sieyès and Ducos, which was duly returned. By now everybody knew that there was something brewing. Complete secrecy was no longer possible, and speed was essential. The Jacobins were thoroughly alarmed, and the old fear of retribution tortured them once more. The forced loan was dropped. They must be attacked before their audacity returned.

This was the manner of the working out of the plan. Roederer looked after the strategy, Talleyrand the tactics. Every evening, generally after dark, Roederer had a talk with Bonaparte in the rue de la Victoire, and then a discussion with Sieyès in the Luxembourg. The other Directors had to be hoodwinked. Therefore, whenever Roederer had to go to the Luxembourg, he took Talleyrand with him and sent him up first to make sure that no unwanted person was about. Sieyès, to lull the suspicions of his colleagues, left his doors wide open. When Talleyrand gave the word, Roederer would leave the carriage and come in. Barras was encouraged to imagine that he was to play a leading part in the conspiracy, and would be consulted later. Moulin was too

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stupid to bother about. Gohier, who had become infatuated with Josephine, was looked after by her. Frequent invitations to the rue de la Victoire kept him out of the way. Lucien, in the rue Verte, was working on selected members of the Five Hundred. Fouché kept an eye on the faubourgs. The Generals also had their tasks. Berthier concentrated on winning over those high officers who were still dubious. Murat made himself responsible for the cavalry officers, Lannes talked to the infantry, Marmont to the artillery.

One of the first to call on Bonaparte was the poet Arnault, who has left us the moving description of the death of Danton. Arnault soon became one of the chief conspirators and was calling every day in the rue de la Victoire. He was also present at the discussions which took place in Joseph Bonaparte's castle at Mortefontaine. Here the various tasks were allotted, and Arnault and Régnault, under the direction of Roederer, prepared the literature of the conspiracy—proclamations, pamphlets, and even a popular song to appeal to the stalwarts of the Halles. Although the utmost secrecy was observed, it was impossible to prevent rumours, and there was always the chance that Fouché might betray the whole affair, if he thought that would serve his purpose. But Fouché did his best to put the more suspicious at their ease by giving a dinner, at which, as a compliment to Bonaparte, an arrangement of the poems of Ossian made by Chénier, and set to music by Fontenelle, was sung by Lais and Chéron. But nobody trusted him, and when there was to be a meeting the conspirators took care to arrive one by one. Apart, however, from the exchange of ideas between Sieyès and Bonaparte, through Roederer and Talleyrand, there was nothing clear-cut in the arrangements. Bonaparte watched the others deceiving each other, and deceived them all. Lucien, Talleyrand, Sieyès, Barras, Fouché, were all working for themselves. Of the deputies and other supporters of the conspiracy, none knew exactly what it was that Bonaparte wanted, and he skilfully left each small group to imagine that he wanted what they wanted. Probably he was more in sympathy with Roederer's ideas than with those of anyone else ; that is with the ideas of the Moderates : a strong Government of the kind which would satisfy all but the extreme Jacobins ; a system in

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which there would be room for royalists and republicans to work side by side ; a Republican Government based on the liberty of the individual and the security of personal property. All this Bonaparte could support. But he intended to be himself the Government. It was to the principles of the Revolution that he was attached, not to the Republic<sup>1</sup>, and in that he had great masses of the people behind him. As far as the plans could be made in advance by Sieyès and his friends, they had been made. Bonaparte was merely supposed to take the place that had been reserved for Joubert or for Moreau. It suited him to allow Sieyès to think that he was satisfied with this place. But his real purpose had been revealed before he sailed from Egypt. He was going to kick out the lawyers.

Two weeks before the plan was executed, Bonaparte said to Roederer : " No man is more pusillanimous than I am when I draw up a plan for a military operation. I exaggerate every danger and every possible obstacle. I fall into a deplorable state of agitation. But that doesn't prevent me from appearing perfectly calm in presence of those about me. I'm like a woman in childbirth. Then, when I've made my decision, everything is forgotten saving whatever is necessary to execute that decision successfully."

<sup>1</sup> He said "*Je suis la Révolution*," but never "*Je suis la République*."

## CHAPTER XIV

### *The Final Preparations for Brumaire*

#### I

BONAPARTE took as much care now not to appear to be conspiring as he had taken during his last visit to Paris. When he had to show himself, he was noticeably discreet. Reinhard, the new Foreign Minister, asked him to dinner, and Mme Reinhard was struck by his unassuming manner. There was, she said, nothing of the victorious soldier or the conspirator about him. As before, he enjoyed most the society of learned men, the writers and the scientists of the Institute, whom he never ceased to amaze by his knowledge and by the charm of his conversation. Nor could anything be calculated to make them esteem him even more, than the visit of homage he paid to the aged widow of Helvétius at Auteuil. But he had a part to play and he was playing it well. At Pont-de-Briques, in 1803, he talked about himself at considerable length to Mme de Rémusat, and, whether her report of the conversation is correct or not, the remarks attributed to him about Brumaire summed up all that can be said to-day of what was in his mind. "The Directory were frightened at my return. I was very careful. It was one of the periods of my life in which I acted with the soundest of judgment. I saw the Abbé Sieyès, and promised him that his verbose Constitution should be promulgated. I received the leading Jacobins and the Bourbon agents. I listened to advice from everybody, but gave advice only in the interest of my own plans. I hid myself from the people, because I knew that when the moment came, curiosity to see me would bring them running after me. Everyone was caught in my nets. And when I became the head of the State there was not a party in France which did not build some special hope on my success." It would seem that even the inner ring of conspirators were for some time uncertain whether Bonaparte would act with Sieyès or with Barras. Fouché's advice was that he should work with

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Barras, while, at the same time, using Sieyès. At the end of October Barras invited Bonaparte to dine, and his behaviour determined Bonaparte to have no more to do with him. Barras suggested Hédouville as President of the Republic, but let Bonaparte see that he wanted the position for himself. Fouché and Réal tried to repair the mischief, but by then Bonaparte had decided that Sieyès was his man and that Barras must be hoodwinked, to prevent him from becoming dangerous.

By the beginning of November, then, Bonaparte and Sieyès had come to an agreement to work together, and the ground was prepared for discussions. But there was not much to discuss. The two men were bound to dislike each other, the better acquainted they became<sup>1</sup>. Sieyès, who still thought there might be a bare chance of using Bonaparte and then getting rid of him, was not inclined to discuss his ideas for the new Constitution in any detail. And even had he been so inclined, he was incapable of putting his theories lucidly into conversation, and had not written them down. Bonaparte, on the other hand, was not likely to disclose his own secrets. He saw the difficulties ahead, and was prepared to take the risk. Sieyès also saw the risk, and knew that it had to be taken. Nobody could be certain that the Jacobins might not forestall the conspirators. All over Paris it was known that another crisis was approaching and that this time it would be no mere superficial change in the Government. This time more than the careers of the Directors or the fortunes of a faction was at stake. The juggling of Fructidor and Floréal could not be repeated. This time it was a question of complete anarchy or the founding of a solid Government. If the Jacobins were alarmed so were the conspirators. Talleyrand's well-known story of these days, too good not to be repeated, shows the state of mind in which the conspirators worked. One night there was a meeting in his house in the rue Taitbout. Midnight went by, and still the discussion continued between Talleyrand and Bonaparte. And as they sat talking by candlelight the silence of the street below was broken by hoof-beats and the clatter of armed riders. The

<sup>1</sup> According to Barras, shortly before Brumaire Bonaparte was calling Sieyès a priest sold to Prussia, and Sieyès was calling Bonaparte a rebellious soldier who ought to be shot. Arnault had been at a dinner at which the two ignored each other.



detachment halted outside the house, and the two men exchanged an anxious look. Then Talleyrand blew out the candles, and they sat quite still in the darkness, as so many men had sat in those last years, awaiting arrest, or prepared to escape by a back entrance. They made no movement, expecting every minute to hear men beating on the door and the summons to open. When no summons came, Talleyrand rose stealthily and walked to the window. Looking between the curtains, he saw the detachment of cavalry and, in their midst, a carriage which had broken down, and he came back into the room with the explanation. The carriage which had broken down was taking money from the gambling rooms of the Palais Royal to a banker's house in the rue de Clichy. The horsemen were a very necessary escort for the bearer of the money.

There can never have been a conspiracy in which the leading conspirators had so little in common, trusted each other so little, and cloaked their own intentions so carefully beneath vague phrases of collaboration. But of all the intriguers the master-intriguer was Bonaparte himself. He told Mme de Rémusat later, as we have seen, that he had been receiving Bourbon agents. And he also received Jourdan. This general came to him as the spokesman of a party of Jacobins who were willing, if he would abandon Sieyès, to put him in power. Jourdan was answered not by an indignant refusal, but by an invitation to dinner. And this was the method Bonaparte employed with all his callers. He gave no blunt refusals, he made no promises, but he let them all think that they might possibly induce him to join them. It was particularly important not to turn Jourdan away, because a considerable part of the Army was Jacobin. Many high officers remembered Vendémiaire, and still regarded Bonaparte as a Jacobin. But behind the practical politics of this effort to hoodwink everybody and prevent any form of united opposition, we can discern the scheme which he was to put into effect later: the system of fusion, by which no party and no opinion need remain outside the reconstructed France; the system which tried to blend the old régime with the new, to mix what was best under the Monarchy with all that was worthy to survive of the Revolution.

After Campo-Formio the dispirited people had quickly sunk

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into despair again because Bonaparte, of whom they expected so much, did nothing. He himself admitted that by remaining in Paris he would lose his popularity. The same situation would now arise again unless he acted soon. When the outburst of joy which greeted his return had spent itself, the daily problems reasserted themselves. The country was still on the brink of ruin, and once more they expected the victorious soldier to rescue it, and to put an end to the misery of the times. They still called him General Vendémiaire, a name that was useful to him in his dealings with Jourdan, but which was by no means to his liking. It suggested that he was expected to repeat his military coup, but this time against the Government. Whereas he preferred the emphasis to be placed on his civilian qualities. The Army would have to come into the conspiracy, but in a very careful manner, like a police force which is on the spot to keep order.

The state of the country and the possibility of a Jacobin rising were reasons for acting with speed. There was a third reason. The secret might leak out. It had not been necessary to reveal the full extent of the plot to all the adherents. Some would have been frightened away, others would have talked too freely. But, few though Bonaparte's appearances were in public, and however studiously he avoided popular acclamation, he had to pay and to receive certain visits. That is why he was impartial both in his hospitality and in his acceptance of invitations. Nobody could say he was favouring any faction. If he dined with Bernadotte one day, he dined with Talleyrand the next. If he received a royalist in the rue de la Victoire, there was probably a Jacobin waiting to see him when the royalist left. Even the generals who called on him were of all shades of opinion, from the fiery Jacobin Augereau to the quiet Moreau. And all the time the chief agents of the conspiracy were making their lists of supporters, and of opponents who could be neutralized. Arnault and Cabanis and Constant worked among the intellectuals, Berthier catalogued the soldiers, Lemer cier and Lucien Bonaparte<sup>1</sup> sounded the deputies. Even the bankers were not forgotten. As for the mass of the people, no propaganda was needed to gain their support, and Fouché

<sup>1</sup> Lucien made use of Mme Récamier's country house near Bagatelle. He was at this time falling in love with her.

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and his police would answer for any sign of insurrection in the faubourgs. By the end of the first week of November the arrangements were almost completed.

### II

The plan, as it stood, was so clumsily conceived that it was bound to be clumsily executed. Its chief weakness was that it was neither one thing nor another; neither a military coup nor a constitutional change of Government. It broke all the rules of such sudden, swift strokes, by being divided into two parts with a whole night between them. The success of the first part depended on lying and trickery. The Ancients had to be persuaded to vote the transference of the two Chambers to Saint-Cloud, which it was within their powers to do. But to provide a reason for the transference, a Jacobin plot was invented, and to make sure of the decree being voted, those who were known to be likely to oppose it would not be summoned to the session in the usual way. The command of the garrison troops was to be illegally given to Bonaparte, and he would see to the execution of the decree. He would come to the Tuileries and accept the post. That was the programme for the first day. It has been so often repeated that Bonaparte and Sieyès wished only to work by constitutional methods that the dishonest means employed from the very first moment must be emphasized. There was no chicane they were not prepared to use in order to maintain the pretence that the Government was actually willing to vote its own overthrow, and that the Constitution could be violated constitutionally.

The conspirators could count almost with certainty on the success of the first and least important part of their plan. But the second day would be a very different matter, and for that day no detailed programme could be drawn up. Too much would depend on chance. For it was a question of inducing the hostile Five Hundred to change the Constitution, and of making them aware that if they were reluctant to do this, Bonaparte and the troops were at hand to apply rough persuasion. In what manner the

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troops would intervene was not decided, because, to begin with, their attitude to what occurred could not be foretold, except in the case of a few sure regiments under Generals who had their orders from Berthier, and were prepared to do what they were told. It had not even been decided with any clarity what form of Government was to succeed the present one. In the last resort, if things went badly, nobody doubted that Bonaparte and the regiments that would follow him anywhere, could settle the affair by armed force, probably after a clash with the special troops which formed the bodyguard of the Government. But that was the very thing which Bonaparte would not do. It would have suited Murat and the more hot-headed of his Generals, who knew what was intended, and had no patience with civilian methods. But Bonaparte preferred to create difficulties for himself, for he was looking further ahead than the rest of them. He had no intention of starting his great work of regeneration as a General who had seized power. He intended to be put in power.

To sum up, the first day should be an easy triumph, but would settle nothing. The second day was a matter of chance. Certain precautions could be taken, but the rest must be improvisation.

What were the chances, for and against complete success, as they appeared to the conspirators in the last days before setting the plot in motion?

They had the Inspectors of the Ancients on their side, and it was they who would forget to summon any but supporters to the extraordinary session. They had the President of the Ancients, Lemer cier, and such influential members as Rég nault, Cornet, Cornudet, Fargues. They had the President of the Five Hundred, Lucien, and such deputies as Boulay, Gaudin, Chazal. The Institute supported them. Through Réal and Le Couteux de Canteleu they could depend on the administrative authorities of the capital, and through Fouché on the services of the police. Of the Ministers, Cambacérès was with them, and Reinhard could be depended upon. In the Directory, Barras would either join them at the last minute or be bought off. Ducos was the shadow of Sieyès. Of the 7,000 troops of the garrison they could reckon on all who had served in Bonaparte's campaigns, such as the cavalry of Murat and Sébastiani, and the infantry of Sérurier.

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Moreau was an unenthusiastic supporter. Macdonald, Marmont, Lannes, Thiébault, Beurnonville could be relied on. And, lastly, the great mass of the people would approve whatever was done against the Government and the Jacobins, provided it was done at once.

To counter all that was in their favour they had the clumsiness of the plan, the timidity of the Ancients, and the intractability of the Five Hundred, many of whom would most certainly see through the device of getting them away from the capital and making any demonstration by their followers impossible. Dubois-Crancé, the Minister of War, would oppose them, but the appointment of Bonaparte would make him powerless to take any action against them. Lefebvre, the present commander of the garrison, would bluster, but would be easily won over. The grenadiers of the Government would be hostile if the troops had to march on the Chambers, and would have to be most carefully handled. Jourdan and Augereau and Bernadotte would all have to be watched, as possible leaders of a strong opposition in the Five Hundred. Josephine would immobilize Gohier, and Moulin did not matter.

On the whole, the great prestige of Bonaparte should make up for all the deficiencies of the plan, and if it was to be a near thing, he could count on his star, his amazing good fortune, to decide the day. That was what he himself thought, and that was why he, with his love of order and precision, was ready to put all to the chance, and to stake his future on the ramshackle organization into which there was no time to introduce cohesion.

Some deputy of the Ancients, possibly in order to show that no great event was impending, had the idea of offering a banquet to Bonaparte and Moreau. It took place on November 6th in the Church of Saint-Sulpice, then known as the Temple of Victory, and, according to Gohier, who presided, was a miserable failure. Toasts were drunk without enthusiasm, and all the guests were preoccupied. The people in the streets murmured against such a banquet taking place while so many were starving. Bonaparte ate very little, made a short speech, and then went round shaking hands, with Berthier at his side. He left before the banquet was over, for he had an appointment with Sieyès. At this meeting,

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only three days before taking action, they for the first time agreed on what would follow the success of the scheme ; the Chambers would be suspended for three months, three Consuls would take the place of the Five Directors, and they would make a new Constitution.

### III

The 16th Brumaire, November 7th, was fixed for the plan to be put into operation, but there was a hitch, which made postponement necessary. On the evening of November 6th Roederer and Régnault and Arnault were with Talleyrand in the rue Taitbout, awaiting confirmation that the next morning was to see the beginning of the affair. But no word came, and Arnault, as being the least likely to attract attention, was sent off to the rue de la Victoire. He found Josephine presiding over a salon of a kind that made him wonder what on earth was going on. There were men of every profession and every faction present, Jacobins and royalists, soldiers and professors, churchmen and lawyers. And Bonaparte appeared to be completely at ease, as though they were all in his confidence. Gohier was there, at the feet of Josephine, and presently Fouché arrived. "Well, citizen Minister," said Gohier to Fouché, "and what's the latest news?" "News?" repeated Fouché; "oh, there's no news." "But surely—" said Gohier in his innocence. "Just the little tittle-tattle, you know; rumours." "About what?" "The conspiracy," said Fouché lightly. Now Josephine knew that Gohier was completely ignorant of the whole business, and she therefore wondered what game Fouché was playing. She gave a little cry—"The conspiracy!" "Yes," said Fouché, in an off-hand manner, "the conspiracy." "Conspiracy!" repeated Gohier with a shrug, as though to say, "What foolish talk!" "I know just how much to believe," continued Fouché. "I know what I'm about, citizen Director. Leave it to me. I'm not one to be caught napping. If there'd been any conspiracy we should have given proof of it on the Place de la Révolution or in the plain of Grenelle." And he laughed loudly. Josephine pretended to be frightened. "Citizen Fouché," she said, "shame on you! How can you

make a jest of such things ? ” Gohier, delighted to have a chance of consoling Josephine, said : “ The Minister talks like a man who knows what he’s about. But don’t be distressed, citizeness Bonaparte. The mere fact that he talks like that in front of the ladies proves that there’s no need for him to carry out his threats. Be like the Government, citizeness. Don’t give yourself any anxiety about such rumours. Don’t let them disturb your sleep.”

This story bears the stamp of truth. It is exactly the kind of trick Fouché liked to play, and Gohier was exactly the kind of man on whom such tricks are played. Bonaparte had listened with a smile, and when Josephine rose and the guests departed, Arnault was able to explain why he had come. Bonaparte informed him that there was to be a delay of two days, because the Ancients were wavering. They wanted a little more time to make up their minds. They were not turning against the conspirators, but they were becoming afraid of the consequences of what they were about to do. Arnault objected that far too many people were in the secret, and there was too much talk, all over Paris, of an impending event. The timidity of the Ancients might wreck the conspiracy. Bonaparte answered : “ I’m giving them time to realize that I can do without their help what I’d rather do with their help. It’s for the eighteenth.” And he went to bed as though he had not a care in the world.

Back in the rue Taitbout a crowd of people were talking and playing whist. Arnault answered the anxious looks of those who were in the secret by a negative nod of the head. Later, when the party had broken up, he told them what had occurred. At midnight he went with Regnault to the house where the literature was being printed, in the Faubourg St.-Germain. In the rue Dauphine a strong police patrol made them wonder if, after all, Fouché intended to smash the plot, by arresting the leaders. They agreed that it was possible. Supposing the printer, Demonville, or his chief compositor, Bonzu, had been got at by Fouché ? The risk had to be taken. The proofs were corrected and the two men went home<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Regnault had got Roederer’s son into the printing works, the proprietor being his friend. The young man was put into a room by himself, where he was supposed to be an apprentice practising the craft.

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The next day, the 17th Brumaire, those of the Ancients who had been won over, but had been attacked by scruples at the last moment, let it be known that they were ready to play their part. While it was still dark, in the morning of the 18th, there was a meeting in the house of Lemer cier, President of the Ancients, attended by Lucien Bonaparte, President of the Five Hundred, and a selected group of the conspirators.

The last hours were used in trying to prevent the Jacobins from guessing too much of what was toward. They were by now so scared that they had begun to talk of getting their unpopular decrees revoked. Bonaparte lunched with Jourdan, and whatever passed between them—promise, threat, or amicable discussion finishing in temporary agreement—the fact is that both Jourdan and Augereau were completely ineffective at Saint-Cloud. Barras still believed that his task would be given to him at the last minute, since nobody would dream of cold-shouldering such a celebrated conspirator. On the night of the 17th Brumaire, Josephine had opened the attack on the Directory. Shortly after eight o'clock Eugène Beauharnais called at the Luxembourg and handed to Gohier the following note: "Please come, my dear Gohier, with your wife, to breakfast with me to-morrow at eight o'clock. Don't fail to come. I have some very interesting matters to discuss with you. Adieu, my dear Gohier, and count always on my sincere friendship. Lapagerie Bonaparte." In case her sincere friendship was not enough to lull the President's slowly awakening suspicions, Bonaparte invited himself to dinner with him on that day, the 18th Brumaire. Gohier confessed afterwards that it was this invitation which made him disregard all the rumours he had heard. "How could I believe in such black perfidy?" he said. On this same night Fabre de l'Aude saw Fouché coming out of the house in the rue de la Victoire.

In order to waste no time, when once the Ancients had assembled, the decree on which everything turned was prepared and written out beforehand. Then Roederer and Bourrienne, with Bonaparte as editor, composed an address to the people of Paris, explaining as much of what was going on as was good for them to know. Talleyrand had in his pocket the letter of resignation which Barras was to be made to sign. When night fell, a personal note was sent



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to each of the more important officers in the secret, summoning them to the rue de la Victoire on the next morning. Moreau and Macdonald were to be there at two in the morning. Bonaparte dined with Cambacérès, and then returned to his house to take a few hours' sleep. All through the night, behind shuttered windows in the Tuileries, lest the light should arouse suspicion, the Inspectors wrote out the *billets de convocation* to the selected deputies, who were to assemble at once in the Tuileries to meet an emergency.

## CHAPTER XV

### *The 18th Brumaire*

#### I

SATURDAY, November 9th—the 18th Brumaire. Long before dawn had broken, the messengers of the Inspectors were rousing the deputies, who well knew what was the purpose of the emergency meeting. Dubois-Crancé at the War Ministry had already sent an order to Sébastiani the Corsican to confine his troops, the 9th Regiment of Dragoons, to their quarters, and, if Sébastiani had obeyed, the opposition might have been considerably heartened. But the General, having signed his receipt of the order, at once disobeyed it, and set his dragoons in motion. As the deputies made their way through the dark streets to the Tuileries, they saw shadowy horsemen moving up to their positions, and heard the sound of marching columns.

Daylight had not yet come when the Senators took their places, with Lemer cier in the President's chair. Cornet at once rose to read his report of the Anarchist plot. Since there were no facts to give, he uttered vague warnings and described, in the rhetoric of '93, the perils which had made it necessary to summon the Senate so hastily. He told his selected audience that the Jacobin bands were already gathering to strike, and that Paris was no longer a safe place for the government. It was essential that a decree be voted, transferring the legislative body to Saint-Cloud, where the Senate would join them next day. No meeting must be held anywhere before mid-day on the 19th Brumaire. The decree was proposed. Regnier seconded it. It was voted. The only article which caused a few to hesitate was the one which, illegally, conferred the command of the 17th military district on Bonaparte. But the closing words of the decree, addressed to the people, were reassuring. They spoke of the re-establishment of domestic peace and of the ending of the war against the Coalition. In any case, the men who might have opposed the decree, or, at the least, demanded a debate, had not been invited, and had no chance of expressing an opinion. As soon as the decree was voted, Cornet

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and Baraillon set out for the rue de la Victoire. The Senators remained in their seats, to await the reply of Bonaparte.

Hard by that gate of the Tuileries gardens which opened on to the Place de la Révolution (now the Place de la Concorde) a young man of nineteen watched the comings and goings of the Generals, and the movements of the troops. Philippe de Ségur has described his state of mind on that morning. He saw no purpose in his life, the future seemed hopeless, and his thoughts were on suicide. As he watched without interest the gathering crowds, there came from the Tuileries gardens the sound of galloping horses and the jingle of accoutrements. It was Murat's cavalry: "*A cet aspect martial, le sang guerrier que j'avais reçu de mes pères bouillonna dans toutes mes veines. Ma vocation venait de se décider ; dès ce moment je fus soldat ; je ne rêvais que combats et je méprisai toute autre carrière.*" A few days later, the grandson of that marshal of France who had become Louis XVI's Minister of War, enlisted in a cavalry regiment. The future historian of the campaign of 1812 had found his purpose in life.

## II

The house from which Bonaparte set out for the adventure of Brumaire no longer exists. It had belonged to Julie Talma, the actor's wife, and its entrance was where stands to-day No. 60, rue de la Victoire. The synagogue in the same street is on the site of what was, for some time, the home of Louis and Hortense. Josephine's house was a small and unpretentious building of stone. You reached it through a carriage entrance, which brought you into a long stone-flagged passage-way. At the end of this was a courtyard, with stables to the right, and to the left the house itself, with a garden behind it which reached almost to the present rue de Châteaudun. There were only two storeys and no attics. On the ground floor was a dining-room, a drawing-room, elaborately decorated with scenes from Roman history, and a smaller room. On the first floor were three bedrooms. Josephine's was fantastically furnished with leather-covered drums for seats and draperies that made the room look like a tent. Her boudoir was composed almost entirely of mirrors.

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By the time the emissaries of the Ancients had reached the rue de la Victoire, the decree which they came to notify officially must have seemed a mere formula. For at all the entrances there surged a crowd, and even the garden was filled. And every member of that crowd was in military uniform. Minute by minute, more officers arrived, and at first showed surprise, and then either hesitation or enthusiasm. For Bonaparte, as has been said, had sent to each a separate summons, and each had expected a private interview. But now it was clear that the detested Government was going to be overthrown, and there were few there who cared how it was done so long as the lawyers were sent packing. Some of the high officers whose hesitation appeared dangerous were dealt with by Bonaparte himself, or by Berthier. They were received warmly and almost dragged into the house to have things explained to them. If they tried to get away before the doors closed behind them, they found their retreat cut off by a disorder of carriages and horses, for the new arrivals were impatient to hear what was afoot. Only Bernadotte, who came in civilian dress, and was unable to make up his mind, got away. And Joseph Bonaparte took care of him. But there was one General who arrived in a rage—the bluff Alsatian Lefebvre, whose place Bonaparte was taking. He had heard about the decree. Bonaparte, who could read men at a glance, made him a little speech about the perils of the Republic, and gave him a sword which he had worn in Egypt. Lefebvre was conquered.

When the decree was presented there was a slight hitch. On reading it through, Bonaparte noticed that his command included the entire garrison of Paris, with the exception of the troops which formed the personal guard of the five Directors. Probably Sieyès intended to provide for his own protection if things went wrong. By at once issuing an order of the day to his command, and mentioning in it the name of this force, Bonaparte countered the trick, and signified to Cornet his intention of coming immediately to the Tuileries to thank the Senate for the trust they had reposed in him.

By this time the officers were impatient for action. Detachments of troops had already formed up along the route which the cavalcade would take. They were in position all along the

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Chausée d'Antin, and, on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, Marmont waited with his staff. The sightseers, too, were growing excited. There was no attempt on the part of the people to support either side, but they were as delighted as the soldiers at the prospect of seeing the Government turned out. From his inner room, with Berthier at his side, Bonaparte gave orders for the National Guard to be kept in hand, while Réal suspended the municipal councils and forestalled any attempt by the old sections to interfere. The bills and pamphlets which Roederer had had printed were distributed, and a watch was set on those quarters where the revolutionary tradition of mob-movements was strongest. There had been rumours that Santerre was at work, but there had been no response from the faubourgs.

At about nine o'clock, with a pale sunshine breaking through the clouds, Bonaparte, in his general's uniform, appeared on the steps at the entrance to his house, with Lefebvre beside him. At the sight of him swords were drawn, and he was acclaimed. He told them, in his harsh, jerky voice that the Republic was in danger, and that the business of the day was to save it. Then he mounted his horse and rode forward at the head of the procession. In the house Josephine waited for the cautious Gohier, who, unaccustomed to invitations at such an hour, suspected that he was being made a fool of, and had decided not to keep the appointment. Mme Gohier, alarmed at what she had seen, had, at Bonaparte's entreaty, written a note to her husband. But instead of urging him to come, she told him what was going on, and bade him keep away. Marmont was breakfasting with a group of officers, when Duroc brought word that Bonaparte was at the Pont Tourmant. Two of the officers refused to follow Marmont. For the others he provided horses, and the partly joined the procession near the Madeleine.

Huge crowds gathered to see the man for whom France had been waiting. They saw, also, the generals whose names were already covered with glory—Moreau, Murat, Macdonald, Lannes, Berthier, Marmont. But their eyes were on the less imposing figure of the leader, and they hailed him as the Liberator as he crossed the Place de la Concorde, where the crumbling statue of Liberty still stood on its newly repaired pedestal, and headed for

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the gardens of the Tuileries. On every side his troops were in position, to protect the Ancients; or perhaps to warn them not to change their minds. Meanwhile, a spectacle of a different kind had amused the crowds on the quays. Over the Pont-Royal and through the Louvre Gate came, sitting his horse uneasily, and accompanied by two aides, Sieyès, the maker of Constitutions.

Peering from his window at the corner of the rue de Provence, Ouvrard the banker had seen the procession go by, and, with the sound instinct of his kind, sat down there and then and desired Admiral Bruix to inform General Bonaparte that he was prepared to place funds at his disposal.

### III

At nine o'clock Sieyès was in the Luxembourg waiting for word that the decree had been notified to Bonaparte. He had gone into the gardens for a last riding lesson, for he, too, had planned a triumphal procession. He would lead the Directory guard to the Tuileries, surrounded by a staff of his own. As soon as the messenger announced that Cornet had presented the decree, Sieyès gave orders to summon his own little army. But the commanding officer evidently preferred to serve, on this day of all days, under a soldier, and he had led the guard to the Tuileries without awaiting instructions. He left two officers. The riding lessons had hardly been worth the waste of time. Gohier, who had received his wife's note, and was by now thoroughly alarmed, issued orders for a meeting of the Directors. Ducos presented himself, but made a pretext to slip away. Barras was in his bath. Sieyès could not be found. Gohier had to content himself with the foolish Moulin. They sat together and asked each other questions. All they knew, by official notification, was that the two Chambers were to be transferred to Saint-Cloud. Since they were not of the conspiracy, they had, of course, been told nothing of the illegal appointment of Bonaparte. They were still sitting together, wondering what they should do, when Fouché arrived to carry out a little spying.<sup>1</sup> Since he never made

<sup>1</sup> Arnault and Regnault had called on Fouché, hoping to astonish him with the news of the first move in the conspiracy. Fouché played up to them, pretending to be surprised, and telling them that he must inform the Directory.

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up his mind which side to support until success was beyond doubt for one or the other, he thought it important to know what was happening at the Luxembourg. He was told bluntly that, as Minister of Police, he should be in a position to bring news instead of asking for it. "Go back to those who sent you," said Gohier, and turned his back on him. What was clear, by the time Fouché left them, was that Bonaparte had seized command of the garrison and that Sieyès and Ducos were playing some mysterious game. Barras was their one hope. The three of them would have formed a majority. Barras was a man of action when there was occasion for action. He had had experience of many a crisis in the early years of the Revolution, and had played a military part in the overthrow of Robespierre. With him, they could protest in the name of the legal government, against any illegal action, and could rally the extremists of the Five Hundred. They sent repeated messages to Barras. He replied that he was indisposed. He himself was growing anxious, and was expecting every moment a message from Bonaparte. He, as usual, cared not a sou for anything but his own preservation in office, and merely awaited the word to betray the two fools who pestered him to join their deliberations. Gohier and Moulin were incapable of action on their own, but their feelings did them credit, and if one is tempted to laugh at their helplessness, it is well to remember that in all the welter of treachery and deceit on this day, they alone acted according to the demands of their consciences, and without personal ambition.

Barras, unable to control his impatience any longer, sent his secretary, Bottot, to find out what was happening, and to jog Bonaparte's memory; and Bottot was to find himself, to his bewilderment, used as a momentary symbol of all that was debased and corrupt in the Government of France.

## IV

Bonaparte, making his first speech to a public assembly, avoided the one point which he was expected to make, in order to set at rest the minds of any who had begun to think that things

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were going too far and too fast. Unable, in honesty, to swear loyalty to the Constitution which he had determined to change, he promised to support the Senate, he and his soldiers, in their efforts to save the Republic. He spoke also of the sacred principles of national representation. His Generals cheered. The Senators applauded. But Garat, representing the doubts of a minority, asked why there had been no mention of the Constitution. Lemer cier reminded him that there must be no deliberation before the following day, at Saint-Cloud, and declared the session closed. All had gone well, and Bonaparte, having received congratulations, went out into the Tuileries gardens to review the troops. And there he saw Bottot and listened to what he had to say. There followed the famous scene. Bonaparte was out of humour. He had discovered that he had no talent for addressing an assembly, and the knowledge that he had bungled his speech humiliated him. He realized that if there had been any real opposition among the Ancients, he would have cut a poor figure. Instead of replying to Bottot, he leaned from his horse and seized him by the arm, and placed him exactly where he wanted him. He then cried in a loud voice to the assembled troops and the crowd: "*L'Armée est réunie à moi, je me suis réuni au corps législatif.*" The troops and the people cheered these words, as they would have cheered anything he had to say. Then Bonaparte turned on Bottot and, still shouting, addressed him and, through him, Barras, the Directory, the entire Government of France. "What have you done with the France I left you? . . . ." The speech is famous and, as he delivered it, Bonaparte became exalted and, advancing his horse, drove Bottot back step by step. Every phrase was greeted with wild cheering, and thus he took satisfaction for his inadequacy in the Senate. The explanation of this incident, that he was angry, and at the same time seized a chance of appealing directly to the troops and the people, seems to me a better one than that it was a theatrical performance.<sup>1</sup> To support the latter contention Albert Vandal says that the speech, far from being an improvisation, was, in substance and often in phrase, an address he had received from a Jacobin Club in Grenoble some days before. Vandal further says

<sup>1</sup> Marmont says it was feigned anger.



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that, since it was not Bonaparte's object to break entirely with Barras yet, he added some reassuring words, in a low tone, for Bottot's ear.<sup>1</sup>

Bonaparte inspected the troops and harangued them as he rode up and down. His words, the music, the uniforms—the military spectacle which was the background for something the people only vaguely understood—roused the utmost enthusiasm, and when Bonaparte rode back to the rue de la Victoire he had reason to be satisfied with the first day's work, and with his own part in it. As he rode with his staff about him, he saw on every side Roederer's bills and leaflets, and groups were already reading the pamphlets which had been distributed. These were at great pains to prove that the popular soldier had no thought of tyranny, but was called to save the Republic and bring peace to the people. There must be no suggestion that a successful soldier was seizing power for his own ends.

### V

While Bonaparte was reviewing the troops, the Five Hundred were meeting on the other side of the river, in the Palais-Bourbon. Lucien Bonaparte was in the chair. The members were, for the most part, uneasy. Only a minority knew what was afoot, and were ready to support the conspiracy. The majority knew nothing for certain, but the extremists were ready to make trouble. As soon as the decree transferring the Legislature to Saint-Cloud had been read, Lucien announced that the session was closed. The speed with which this business was completed, and the fact that, theoretically, nothing illegal had been done, disarmed even the most dangerous of the Jacobins. There was nothing for them to do but await the next day's session. Within an hour the Directory also had been disarmed.

Sieyès and Ducos, as arranged, had resigned. But Barras still held on. He had watched the streets through his window and, having had considerable experience of popular movements,

<sup>1</sup> The fact that Bottot had a somewhat detailed knowledge of the relations of Barras with Josephine may have increased Bonaparte's dislike for him. Further, it was Bottot whom the Directors sent to Bonaparte during the negotiations for Campo-Formio, and Bottot told them that Bonaparte was a political jumping-jack, whose crude manners moved the Austrians to laughter.

he knew what conclusions to draw. His surprise that Bonaparte had not sent for him had been followed by Bottot's account of Bonaparte's outburst. Barras, a man of action, knew that he was beaten. Not even a visit from Mme Tallien could put any courage or hope into him. He had never believed it possible that he would be ignored at such a time. He was sitting gloomily alone when Talleyrand and Bruix came in. They handed him a paper, and asked him to sign it. It was his resignation. It is not known by what means they prevailed upon him. When two such men as Talleyrand and Barras do business together, the odds are that history will never know for certain whether bribery or blackmail clinches the matter. Possibly a mixture of the two turned the scale. Barras, of course, said that possibly they meant to bribe him, but that he was not called upon to refuse such an offer, as Talleyrand had stolen the money.

While Barras was making ready to start for his property of Grosbois<sup>1</sup>, some of the chief conspirators were meeting in the Tuileries. Bonaparte had come in from his review of the troops, and he had round him Lucien, Fouché, Boulay, Lemercier, Quinette, Cambacérès, Sieyès, Ducos. When the news of Barras came, there was no longer any danger from the Directory, and there appeared to be no cause for anxiety on that day. But the exasperating Cambacérès, with his formal mind, was soon making difficulties. He asked pompously if the Constitution was still in force. On being told that it was, he explained at tiresome length that, as Minister of Justice, it was his task to give the decree of the Ancients the force of law by inserting it in the *Bulletin des Lois*. But, according to the Constitution of 1795, still in force, no decree could be so published without an order of promulgation from the Directory, signed by the President, and sealed with the seal of the Directory. They had the seal. The Secretary Lagarde had stolen it from the Luxembourg. But what about the President? No other signature would be valid. It is not difficult to imagine the effect of this pedantry on the conspirators. They were all breaking laws, and prepared to break more, and here was a Minister

<sup>1</sup> On this same evening Mme de Staël drove into Paris, and was met by Constant. The carriage of Barras passed her on the road, on its way to Grosbois. Mme de Staël says one name was on everybody's lips, and most honest men hoped for his triumph.

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fussing about a piece of absurd ritual. However, Cambacérès had only taken up this rigid attitude because the situation interested him academically. He himself, having created the difficulty, as one poses an intellectual problem, proceeded to solve it in a way which showed how near to the surface of his mind were his scruples. He said that doubtless Gohier was prevented by circumstances beyond his control from being present. It would be in order, then, to say that he was no longer acting as President. Sieyès had been his predecessor. Let Sieyès sign and apply the seal, and all would be well. There was complete agreement on this point among all present, and Sieyès was about to sign when in walked Gohier and Moulin.

### VI

Sitting together in the Luxembourg, without news, these two had decided to go to the Tuileries to find out for themselves what was toward. Gohier was puzzled, but not over-anxious. Josephine, through a go-between, Mme d'Houchin, had contrived to let him know that Bonaparte thought far more of him than he did of Sieyès. Was not Bonaparte to dine with him that very night? The idea was put into his head that the plot was no more than a matter of making a change in the Directory. Barras was finished, and Gohier and Moulin sat down among the conspirators. They were very gracious and explained the position to Gohier. Would he be kind enough to sign the decree? Confident that he was now "one of them," he signed and sealed the decree, and at once observed that they were not quite so gracious. They had got what they wanted and they now began to hustle the two remaining Directors. Gohier suggested that the Directory should meet for discussion on the spot. Sieyès informed him that there was no longer a Directory. He and Ducos and Barras had resigned, and the next business on the agenda was the resignation of Gohier and Moulin. The two dupes refused to believe that this was a serious suggestion until, after much haggling, Boulay spoke more plainly. Then Gohier lost his temper for a moment, but soon calmed down, and, since the attack on him and Moulin was evidently pre-arranged, he took an honourable stand, letting them

know that neither he nor his friend would consent to anything which was against their principles, their duty, and their conscience. Flatly, both he and Moulin refused to resign. At one point Bonaparte turned to Moulin, hoping he might be more reasonable than Gohier. "Sieyès and Ducos have handed in their resignations," he said. "You are abandoned, isolated. You surely won't refuse to sign?" To which the dullard Moulin made the astonishingly fine retort: "It is not to a Republican General that one can offer as a model the conduct of two deserters."

Bonaparte and the rest of them had already been annoyed by the heavy formalism of Cambacérés. They were now exasperated by the obstinacy of the two Directors. Boulay lost his temper and hinted that there were rougher methods than persuasion and request. Bonaparte restrained him. There must be nothing that would recall the old revolutionary methods of settling such questions. Gohier and Moulin must do what was wanted of them of their own accord. Clearly, neither of them could be dealt with in the fashion of Talleyrand with Barras. And here Bonaparte was face to face with another facet of the chief problem of Brumaire—how to persuade a Government to destroy itself.

Seeing the angry faces about them, Gohier and Moulin decided to go back to the Luxembourg. A detachment of troops escorted them, under the command of Moreau, who had orders to occupy the Palace, and to see that neither of the Directors made trouble. It had not been forgotten that Moulin was reputed to be in touch with the brewer Santerre, at one time mob-leader of the most unruly Sections. When the two Directors arrived at the Luxembourg, it was clear at once that they were to be held as prisoners. Their personal guard was removed, and its commander, Jubé, went to the Tuileries. When Moreau presented himself to Moulin and attempted to make conversation, Moulin indicated the ante-chamber as being the place for the gaoler. Sentries were posted at all the doors and nobody was allowed in or out. The two Directors wrote out a message to the two Chambers, explaining what had occurred. The message was intercepted, and after that the two were forbidden to have any communication with each other. Guards were placed in their rooms, one man even remaining at the foot of Gohier's bed while he slept.

## VII

Bonaparte remained all day at the Tuileries, receiving congratulations and discussing the occurrences of the morning. The success had been so easily won that many were in favour of pressing home the advantage, particularly as the opposition was now being given time to concert its own measures. The man of action found himself forced to restrain his colleagues. He had already rebuked Fouché, who had taken upon himself to close the barriers of the capital. This was the very thing to remind the people of the old days of insurrection, and to stiffen the opposition. It would create exactly the impression which Bonaparte wanted to avoid. Fouché had to countermand the order.

Superficially all had gone well so far for the conspirators. But towards evening, when it became necessary to consider matters more deeply, the prospect was not so reassuring. Why had there been so little difficulty so far ? Because they had worked to a detailed plan, and because surprise had disarmed their opponents. For the next day there was no plan, and their opponents were now thoroughly alarmed. The weakness of the scheme became apparent. By attempting to act constitutionally against the Constitution, Bonaparte had been forced to split his decisive action into two parts, covering two days. The trickery of obtaining a decree from a carefully selected body of the Senate had made it possible to gag the Five Hundred. The Directory had been got rid of. These were successes. But the chief success now became startlingly obvious. Who held the real power already ? Bonaparte, the commander of the garrison troops. Not only had this power been obtained illegally, but, on the next day at Saint-Cloud, the entire Senate (and not a chosen section of it) would meet to consider what had occurred. The Five Hundred, at least half of them hostile, would also have their say. And it would be necessary, after winning their consent to what had been done in such high-handed fashion, to persuade them to substitute a Consulate for the Directory, and then, having voted as directed, to adjourn quietly and disappear from the political scene. What seemed to be the decisive instrument in Bonaparte's hands was really the

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greatest danger to him and to his intentions. There would be a military display, but even a show of force might precipitate a crisis. It would not, in any case, be easy to convince the Jacobins that the troops had come to Saint-Cloud to protect the Government. Protect it from whom? And that thought led to the famous plot which was supposed to have made the emergency decree necessary. Questions would be asked about that.

It was arranged, when darkness had fallen, to call a final meeting of what might be called the Committee of the Conspiracy; Bonaparte, Sieyès, Ducos, Lemer cier, Lucien, Boulay, Gaudin, Régnier, Cabanis, Chazal and a few others. The weather had broken, rain was falling, and the buoyancy and light-heartedness induced by the smooth beginning of the affair had given place to doubts and anxieties. Difficulties seemed to multiply, as the tedious discussion developed. Bonaparte, who must have had a cynical contempt for the fatuity of the debate, left it to the politicians to decide what was so evidently a matter for politicians. His part was to remain, in the eyes of the people, the commander of the troops, pledged to keep order and to suppress any attempt to oppose forcibly the desire of the whole country for a better government. The fiction that so far he had been summoned by the Ancients to help them to meet a crisis, and that on the morrow he would be at hand to see the decree put into execution at Saint-Cloud, was maintained. The Committee talked and talked, without coming to any decision. The stumbling block was the Five Hundred. Even supposing the Ancients overcame their hesitations and dealt firmly with the opposition, who was going to muzzle the Jacobins? Lucien, with the assurance of extreme youth, and exalted by his own ambitions, guaranteed to do it. But nobody believed him and, if anybody else present put forward an idea, there was at once loud criticism. They could agree on nothing, when it came to the means to be employed to achieve their end. Then Sieyès, who had been perplexing his associates with his customary theories, dragged himself up out of the marshes and made a simple, direct, and vigorous suggestion. Those round the table must have been startled that such an idea should come from that quarter. What he proposed was a well-tried manœuvre to cut through the main difficulty of the following day

at Saint-Cloud. He said that the principal Jacobins, about forty agitators and mob-orators, should be placed at once under arrest. Sieyès, like Fouché, knew all the tricks and had watched them working. What could be easier than to disarm the opposition by one quick stroke? Neither Sieyès nor anyone else present could think of any other way of ensuring success. Obviously this very night, while they sat talking, the Jacobins were meeting in cafés all over Paris, and the waverers were being hectored into joining them. Obviously, also, the delay before the time for taking action on the next day would fray the nerves of the timid Ancients, and might make them regret what they had done. Here, from the least practical man present, was a practical suggestion.

Bonaparte rejected the idea without a moment's thought. For two reasons he would have nothing to do with it. First, as with Fouché's rash action in closing the barriers, he saw himself being caught in the trap he was determined to avoid. He knew very well what was his stature, and that he was destined to belong to history. If he permitted this well-worn dodge, he would seem to the people to be like half a dozen other leaders of factions, who fought their way to power by just such methods. Secondly, he had his own ideas for dealing with the Jacobins; his dream of a fusion of all parties forbade him to set himself up as the avowed enemy of any one party. He preferred to take the gambler's chance and trust in his star, at the same time making as sure as possible by keeping in touch with his foes. The Corsican Saliceti was apparently reassuring those Jacobins who were not afraid of Bonaparte's intentions. He may even have told them that, thanks to Bonaparte, a disgraceful suggestion made by Sieyès had been rejected. That would perhaps account for the inactivity of Jourdan on the 19th Brumaire, and for the slimy friendliness of Augereau. That there was practical wisdom in what Sieyès urged is proved by what the Jacobins were up to at this moment. If the soldiers were content to remain neutral, not so men like Destrem and Aréna. Knowing that the old cry had no longer any power to call up the mobs and set the streets on fire, they turned, as a last hope, to the swaggering Bernadotte. Joseph Bonaparte had been detailed to look after him, but Bernadotte gave him the slip and spent the rest of the day among the Jacobins, unhappy, ineffectual, dreaming great dreams,

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but daring nothing ; wondering whether he should not, after all, have attached himself, while he had the chance, to Bonaparte, asking himself whether he had the nerve to challenge Bonaparte, with the Jacobins behind him ; weighing every thought ; referring every impulse to the tribunal of his own ambition. No higher motive mixed with his perturbed calculations.

After much talk—for he was a terrific talker—Bernadotte had decided to constitute himself a kind of half-leader. His suggestion was that as soon as the Five Hundred met next day they should pass a decree making himself and Bonaparte co-commanders of the garrison troops. Bernadotte would at once put himself at the head of all the troops he could find, and march on Saint-Cloud in such an imposing manner that Bonaparte would be only too glad to share the command with him, and to become his colleague. With the Jacobins behind him Bernadotte would emerge from the day as the one man big enough to dominate the situation. This imbecile idea was not received with much enthusiasms, and nothing came of it.

### VIII

On this Saturday evening, then, both sides knew that what had happened so far was comparatively unimportant. The decisive contest would take place on the next day, but neither party had any plan of action. Bonaparte was unreasonably confident. He could not guess how very near he was to come to failure and even to catastrophe. His followers were gloomy, realizing that all the discussion of the afternoon and evening had been waste of time, and that the most important part of the conspiracy was being left to chance. The meeting came to an inconclusive end and the conspirators emerged into the wet streets. Lannes was in command at the Tuileries and his men were standing to arms. In the barracks the regiments were already preparing to take the road. Bonaparte went back to the rue de la Victoire, displeased with the inability of the politicians to put the final touch to the work of Sieyès, knowing that there would be difficulties, but underrating them. To Bourrienne he said : " Well, it has not gone too badly to-day. To-morrow we shall see."

Before he slept he placed his loaded pistols beside his bed.



## CHAPTER XVI

### *The 19th Brumaire*

#### I

FROM barracks all over Paris, from the Tuileries gardens, from Chaillot and Auteuil and Passy, the bugles sounded in the darkness before dawn. The rain had ceased, and soon the troops were moving towards Saint-Cloud, Murat at the head of his cavalry, Sérurier commanding the infantry. Bonaparte in the rue de la Victoire was surrounded by the Generals, to whom he was issuing orders. He was in high spirits, and though he openly despised the hesitation and indecision of his civilian supporters, he showed by his confident bearing that, if a crisis were to arise, he was ready for it. Among his few civilian visitors was the tiresome Cambacérès, with a new burden of doubt and misgiving. He had called on Chazal for information as to the decisions taken at the final meeting in the Tuileries on the previous night. Having forced Chazal to admit that there had, in fact, been no decision, and that he was extremely anxious about the whole affair, Cambacérès came to Bonaparte with his forebodings. But in that military atmosphere he was hardly listened to. He therefore spent the morning in trying to put together an alternative Consulate, in case of failure. Perhaps he approached Moreau. At any rate, among the civilian conspirators he found more sympathy. The dismay at the lack of any plan and the fear of what Bonaparte really intended to do had cooled the enthusiasm of even dependable supporters. In his contempt for the politicians Bonaparte had lately spoken indiscreetly and sometimes with intolerable arrogance. So that, while some feared his failure, others feared still more his success. With a few exceptions, however, they had no intention of letting either failure or success interfere more than momentarily with their careers. Fouché, for instance, confined himself entirely to the police work of maintaining order in Paris. Whoever won, he would have taken no open part outside his routine duties. Sieyès

had a carriage waiting at Saint-Cloud, to get away if the conspiracy failed. Talleyrand had hired a house for the day and filled it with pleasant companions. It would be a more interesting spectacle than Fructidor. On that day, while Augereau was at work, he had sat playing whist, and Mme de Coigny had said : "*Voyez ce que c'est d'avoir un homme de bonne compagnie à la tête des affaires.*"

Bonaparte, with an escort of cavalry, drove in a carriage to Saint-Cloud. Behind him came Bourrienne and Lavalette, and, as they crossed the Place de la Concorde, Bourrienne said : "To-morrow we shall sleep in the Luxembourg—or else we shall finish up here." Progress was slow, as the road to Saint-Cloud was packed with traffic of every description. The parties of sight-seers, who had the air of setting out for a picnic, made it impossible for those unconnected with the day's events to realize that anything serious was toward. The refreshment houses along the way were full of laughing men and women, and in Saint-Cloud itself, in spite of the cold weather, groups were eating and drinking in the open air or in their carriages.

Through the press of people, in a tumult of acclamation, the carriage bearing Bonaparte made its way. It crossed the bridge and climbed the long avenue to that great castle, on the slopes above the river, which the Germans burnt down in 1870. When he got out of the carriage he was nervous, and impatient for the business to begin. And at once there was an exasperation. It had been arranged that the two Chambers were to sit in different halls, the Senate in the great gallery of Apollo which Mignard had decorated, and which ran the entire length of the right wing of the castle, on the first floor. The Five Hundred were to meet in the Orangery, a kind of annexe looking on the garden ; a gloomy hall. Mid-day was the hour fixed for the opening of the deliberations. But since the castle was no longer used, it had been necessary, at short notice, to bring in workmen to prepare the halls, and to arrange a few tapestries and carpets. The vast rooms through which Bonaparte went to inspect the work were cold and damp, and the prospect of a considerable delay before the proceedings could start increased his irritability. But the postponement of the session had a far more serious effect. While waiting for the workmen to finish their work, the members of the

two Chambers went out into the gardens, and mingled and talked. Here was the first thing that had not been foreseen. The extremists of the Five Hundred wasted no time. They had only to point to the troops on every side, and to ask why such a display of force was necessary; to ask, in confidence, why the Chambers had been transferred to Saint-Cloud. The Senators who were in the secret had to withstand the attacks not only of the Jacobins, but also of those of their own colleagues whom the Inspectors had failed to summon on the previous day.

It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon when the Hall of Apollo and the Orangery were at last ready for the members of the two Chambers to take their places. The Senators, as they filed in and sat down on the benches, were in a miserable state of consternation, fearing a Jacobin outbreak, fearing a dictatorship, and many of those in the conspiracy began to wish they had had nothing to do with it. Bonaparte, when he knew that the deliberations were to begin, became more nervous than before. He had heard muttered abuse when he came suddenly on a group of politicians, and he knew the disastrous effect of the delay. He now went back to the large, bleak, unfurnished room, near the Hall of Apollo, where Sieyès and Ducos were shivering by an inadequate fire. This room was connected by a high door with another, in which waited the Generals and the officers of the Staff. Bonaparte paced up and down, every now and then flinging open the door to give an order or summon an officer. From time to time Lavalette arrived to report on the deliberations, and the news was always bad. Bonaparte's behaviour became so irrational that Thiébault walked out and did not return. Or so he says.

## II

To the accustomed strains of music the Senators gravely took their seats. And before the President had declared the session open, a number of those who had not been summoned on the previous day rose to protest. Fargues replied, for the Inspectors, with a deliberate lie, which everybody knew to be a lie. He said that all had been summoned. Since the protest must have been

expected, it was a stupid blunder not to have a better excuse to offer. This absurd reply of Fargues convinced the dissatisfied minority that their suspicions were justified, that there had been an attempt to prevent them from opposing the decree of the previous day, and that the Jacobins with whom they had talked in the gardens were not exaggerating the danger to the Government and the Constitution. They therefore very firmly began to demand some fuller explanation of what was going on. They asked why the decree had been rushed through, and, with more heat, they insisted on their right to fuller information about the Anarchist plot. Let details be given. Once again they were put off with vague phrases about the peril to Liberty, and so on, and so on. They cried for facts, but there were no facts to give them. And so those who sympathized with the conspiracy, the majority, found themselves, by their inept handling of the situation, in a position of extreme difficulty.

Time was passing. It was nearly three o'clock, and the futility of the majority was endangering the whole affair, when Cornudet, who had been in communication with Bonaparte and Sieyès, rose to draw attention to a mere formality. It was one of those formalities dear to all Assemblies, but to the sullen minority it seemed a pretext for diverting attention from their demands. Since, however, it would be a mere postponement of the crisis, they raised no objection. Cornudet pointed out that the decree of transference could not be said to have been legally executed until the two Chambers had informed each other of their presence in their new quarters. The Directory also must be informed. Until the answers were received, there could be no business conducted. Lemer cier the President then suspended the session, pending the arrival of the answer. The whole point of this manoeuvre was that there was no Directory to notify.

A quarter of an hour later Lemer cier read out a message from Lagarde, secretary to the Directors. The message said that the Directory had ceased to exist, and added the lie that four Directors had resigned. This was a clear invitation to the Senate to take action. It was already evident that the dream of an easy victory by constitutional means was a dangerous delusion. The Constitution had already been infringed. The only chance of success

now was for the Senate to announce that the Directory no longer existed, and to suggest a new form of Government. But the lawyers were afraid. As the lawyer Robespierre had hesitated before an illegal act on the last day of his life, so they hesitated now. And the men of the Institute, the writers, the philosophers, the scholars, increased their hesitation. There was nobody there who could lead; nobody who would dare to take responsibility for what had to be done. Lemer cier, to give the members time to make up their minds, again suspended the session. All over the Hall men left their benches, and began to argue and discuss in small groups. Timidity was the one thing all had in common, and most of them at once began to seek for some form of compromise, such as a reconstituted Directory, but without changes in the Constitution. What is astonishing is that men of the highest intelligence could still remain so remote from reality. They had seen the enthusiasm of the people, and had felt on their faces the wind of hope that blew across France when Bonaparte came home. They knew the corruption of those men who represented nobody but themselves, whose only policy since Thermidor had been to save their heads and keep their power. They saw the opportunity presented to them, and did not take it. And while these men of paper continued to talk and talk and talk, the great doors were thrown wide, and on the threshold they saw the strong face of the soldier: Bonaparte.

## III

The opening of the session of the Five Hundred was very different from that of the Ancients. If the theorists and Moderates predominated in the Hall of Apollo, in the Orangery the Jacobins had the upper hand. The men who, through five years, had never been able to throw off the fear that retribution would come to them now found themselves in their greatest peril. And they intended to fight. Even as Lucien Bonaparte went to his chair the uproar started, and the lack of dignity in the proceedings made their long red robes appear more ridiculous than usual. Gaudin, who was of the conspiracy, had the first word. He proposed the

nomination of a committee to enquire into the emergency which had necessitated the decree of transference, and suggested that the session should be suspended until the committee's report was presented. But his hearers were not to be so easily outmanœuvred. With the Five Hundred out of action, as it were, the field would be clear for the Senate to do the conspirators' work. Gaudin attempted to make this idea seem harmless, but he could not get his voice heard, and Lucien, intervening to restore order, was threatened and insulted. This violent outburst, coming at the very beginning of the session, completely disconcerted the supporters of the conspiracy. They were, in any case, a minority. But the waverers among them now decided that the coup would fail; there was, however, no hope for them in that thought. A Jacobin success would be worse than a military dictatorship. The extremists, whose aim was a dictatorship of their own complexion, with themselves once more securely in power, now began to shout that the Constitution was threatened. They cared not a sou for the Constitution, but they saw their chance of appearing as the defenders of the Government against attempted tyranny. Grandmaison put this thought of theirs into words. He suggested that the Five Hundred should send a message to the Ancients, requesting them to make a statement on the situation; a statement which should explain why their decree had been so hastily issued, and should furnish detailed proof of the anarchist plot. Failure to comply with this request would place the Five Hundred in a very strong position and might, even at the eleventh hour, deceive the people into believing that it was the Jacobins who had the true interests of the country at heart. But the majority of the Jacobins were too excited to be contented with this. They required something more dramatic. A demand that every single member, one by one, should renew his oath of fidelity to the Constitution, was carried unanimously—to the great satisfaction of Lucien and of the minority. The oath was a ceremonial affair. Each member, as his name was called, had to come to the tribune, stretch out his arm, and repeat the prescribed form of words. Without counting the delays, Lucien reckoned that the Senate would now have plenty of time to act. The procession to the tribune began.

## IV

In the cold unfurnished room Sieyès still shivered, bending close over the hearth. Bonaparte still paced up and down. In the ante-room the officers had grown impatient, and then apprehensive. There were rumours, and there was a stronger thing than rumour—an atmosphere of failure. From the moment of the first unfortunate mingling of the two Chambers in the grounds there had been nothing but unwelcome tidings. Yet the affair must be finished this day, and darkness would soon be falling. As Lavalette and the other messengers went to and fro, it became obvious that the Ancients were incapable of any action, and that the Jacobins could not be held by Lucien. Presently it was said that Jourdan and Augereau, who had more or less promised to lie low, had arrived. This was a sure sign that the Jacobins felt confident, and that in the outside world the failure of the conspiracy was being talked of; even in Paris. The two Generals were members of the Five Hundred, but they did not go into the Orangery. Jourdan talked to the troops, trying to find out what their attitude would be if the thing came to a head. Augereau, that rough swordsman from the Faubourg St. Marceau, sought out Bonaparte and tried to persuade him to give up the attempt. "You're in a fine mess," he said. To which Bonaparte replied: "The wine is drawn, and I must drink it."

One of the messengers announced that the Five Hundred were swearing fidelity to the Constitution, and that the Ancients had once more suspended the session and gone into consultation. Bonaparte, angry, and contemptuous of the men who were supposed to be his supporters, realized that the hour had come for him to intervene, while success was still possible. It was a step he had not intended to take. He had wished to remain in the background until the Government itself summoned him, and had half expected that the change might be effected rapidly, before the opposition in the Five Hundred had had time to organize itself. Even the initial delay need not have jeopardized the plan, if the Senate had behaved with vigour and determination. For another reason, also, he was

reluctant to intervene. He knew now that he made a poor showing in an Assembly, and that the Senate had already had an example of his inability to address them. But success and failure were in the balance, and when once his mind was made up he acted quickly. He turned to Sieyès, who was trying to stir the fire to a blaze with a bit of wood, since there was no poker. "You see what they are doing," he said. "Not much harm in swearing fidelity to part of the Constitution," said Sieyès, "but the whole Constitution—no, that won't do at all." Lavalette, who had delivered the message, retired to the ante-room, where he found the staff officers gloomy and ill at ease. Suddenly the door opened and Bonaparte came out. He chose a few aides, and called to his brother Joseph, to Lavalette, Bourrienne, and Berthier, bidding them accompany him. Then he set off, almost at a run, through the rooms that led to the Hall of Apollo. An aide preceded him and announced his presence. The talking died down, the groups broke up, and the Senators made their way to the benches. Since this incursion was illegal, Lemer cier did not resume the session. He merely indicated that the Ancients were ready to hear what General Bonaparte had to say. Bonaparte therefore took up his position in front of the dais on which the President was seated in his chair, with Berthier and Bourrienne on either side of him. The Senators looked at him curiously. They were not unsympathetic, but they showed him no enthusiasm. He, aware of this, was attacked by a kind of stage-fright. Had they been soldiers, he could have filled them with his fire, but he was breathing an alien air. And there must have been many there who wondered what was the secret of his power over men, as they looked closely at the puny, almost sickly-looking body in the ill-fitting clothes; at the pale face, the untidy hair. Still more must they have wondered when he began to speak falteringly, and in a harsh, jerky voice, stumbling over his words, as though he were repeatedly losing the train of his thought. He told them that they were in peril, that he and his comrades had hurried to the rescue, only to be met with calumnies and talk of a military tyranny. "Had I wanted a military Government, should I have come here to offer support to the representatives of the nation? Time is running short . . . Prompt measures are essential . . . There is no Government . . .



## BRUMAIRE: THE RISE OF BONAPARTE

There is only the Council of Ancients. . . . Let it act, let it speak. I am here to carry out its commands. Let us save Liberty. Let us save Equality." Here he was interrupted. A voice cried: "And what of the Constitution?" For a moment he was silenced. Then he continued. He said: "You yourselves have destroyed the Constitution. You violated it on the eighteenth Fructidor. You violated it on the twenty-second Floréal. You violated it on the thirtieth Prairial. Nobody any longer respects it. I will now disclose all to you."

In spite of his awkward manner and villainous delivery, they were interested at last, even held. If they could now have details of the famous plot, supported by names, they would feel surer of themselves, and would be more inclined to risk illegalities, and to come out whole heartedly on the side of Bonaparte. The many Moderates there were only too ready to get rid of the Jacobins once and for all, but they required certain explanations.

They did not get them. He spoke vaguely of factions, men of blood, terrible designs, accomplices, and then fell back on a further defence of himself. In order to save him from worse blunders, his highly embarrassed supporters cut him short and tried to rush a vote, but were reminded that the Council was not in session. So the session was re-opened and Bonaparte was invited to attend. Cornudet then did his best to restore the situation. But the Senators were in no mood to listen to such phrases as; "He before whom Europe and the entire Universe are silent in admiration bears witness to the plot. Are we to regard him as a vile impostor?" The old cry that Robespierre had heard so often came from every part of the Hall: "Names! Names! Names!" Cornudet attempted to ignore the demand, and to rouse the members to the point where they would be ready to make definite proposals, irrespective of what the Five Hundred were doing or saying. But still the unsatisfied and the suspicious insisted on returning to the question of the plot. Some called for a committee to go into the matter. That increased the opposition, and the Senate was by now as turbulent and disorderly as the Five Hundred. Stubborn in his defeat, enraged at his own blundering insufficiency, disgusted with the futility of the proceedings, Bonaparte went on trying to make himself heard.

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He gave them two names. Barras and Moulin, he said, had told him of a plot. But the Ancients would not listen to him. Growing more and more exasperated, he completely lost his head and made matters even worse. Realizing that he was unable to carry the Senate with him by persuasion, he tried to bully them. "Remember," he said, with unbelievable stupidity, "remember that I go my way accompanied by the god of victory and the god of war." So had he spoken once to Moslem rulers in Egypt. The effect of such a threat, repeated in such a place, was instantaneous. He had lost his last chance of influencing them. Yet still he continued, as though determined to drive from him the last of his supporters and to throw away in a rage the prestige which he had enjoyed when he entered the Hall. He began to abuse the Five Hundred, inciting the Senators. And finally, the crown of all his monumental folly on this day, he turned to the grenadiers on duty at the doors and addressed them directly: "You, my comrades, you, brave grenadiers, if any orator, in the pay of the foreigner, dares to utter the words '*Hors la loi!*' against your general, may the thunderbolt of war crush him on the instant."

Lemercier did his best to repair the damage, but it was obvious that Bonaparte's visit had made it very difficult for his supporters to defend him. He had come with the intention of bringing the Senators to the point where they would propose the formation of a new Government. They were now less inclined than ever to take action, so they went on talking.

### V

It appears to be the strange truth that when Bonaparte left the Hall of Apollo he was in good spirits. There was no sign either of anger or of humiliation. He behaved as though he thought he had done well, and he sent a message to that effect to Josephine in Paris and to Arnault, come from Talleyrand to advise speed, he said that everything would turn out well. But what ground had he for this belief, save that he knew the troops, in the last resort, would follow him?

He came straight from his ordeal in the Senate to the Orangery,

consulting nobody. He knew what had occurred in the Orangery, and by now the Five Hundred must have had word of what he had said to the Ancients. What did he hope to achieve by this remarkable display of courage? According to himself, he intended to divide the Five Hundred into two infuriated factions, by revealing the confidences of Jourdan. Albert Vandal thinks that his object was to provoke, by his mere presence, a tumult of the kind which would give to the Ancients the pretext for action. But there is a third explanation of the whole episode. It is this. He went to the Senate, fully determined to inspire them to continue the work they had begun the day before in Paris; to put forward the proposal for a Consulate. Having blundered in his address to them, and having done more harm than good by losing his temper, he at last knew for certain what Sieyès was to admit an hour later, that only armed force could bring the conspiracy to a successful conclusion. Still genuinely angry, but perhaps acting a little, he gave the Senate its last chance by hinting plainly that if they withstood him longer, he would call on the troops to follow him. The few words to the grenadiers were a threat. Even after that he remained in the Hall, to see if Lemer cier and his other friends there could bring the rest to their senses. Then, knowing that the account of what had occurred would drive the Five Hundred into a frenzy, and that his own appearance, uninvited, among them would lead to an explosion, he made his way to the Orangery, satisfied that he would soon have a pretext for armed intervention.

This explanation, for which there is no circumstantial evidence, accounts for his sudden calmness and confidence, after hours of nervous strain; also for his frequent unguarded phrases during the past weeks—as though he knew all along that it would come to a show of force, but was willing and even anxious to give the politicians every chance of doing what he wanted in a regular manner. [That morning, in the rue de la Victoire, he had said, laughingly, to his Generals: “Do you think there will be fighting to-day?” I find it significant also that he should have made use of the cry of outlawry in his speech to the grenadiers. Nobody had uttered such a threat, nor was such a threat likely to be uttered in the Senate, where there was far more futility than hostility.

But it was exactly the kind of cry the Jacobins in the Five Hundred would use. Many of them had been present when Robespierre heard it on the 9th Thermidor. Possibly, in using the words "*Hors la loi*" to the Ancients, Bonaparte was suggesting them to the Five Hundred, daring them to challenge him. At any rate, whatever he expected to happen in the Orangery, it was not what did happen.

At the entrance to the Orangery he left the few officers and grenadiers who accompanied him. The Five Hundred, in noisy disorder, were awaiting news from the Ancients: an official statement on the Anarchist plot and the decree. They thought, when they heard the guard turning out at Bonaparte's approach, that the messenger from the Senate was arriving. They crowded into the doorway, and Bonaparte, alone and unrecognized in the turmoil, made his way through them into the Chamber. But as he drew near the tribune he was recognized by a group of men who immediately turned on him, shouting, "*Hors la loi! Down with the tyrant! Kill him! Out with the dictator!*" The threats were taken up on all sides. The members clambered over the benches to get at him. He, half-suffocated, jostled and pummelled, was surrounded. The gigantic Destrem gave him a blow. Others seized him. To increase the confusion, the spectators were trying to push their way out of the hall and found themselves involved in the scuffling. A woman's shrill cry of "*Vive Bonaparte!*" echoed by the spectators, showed what the people thought of their "representatives." Bonaparte was half swooning when Murat and Lefebvre, followed by grenadiers, succeeded in reaching his side. One of the soldiers had his sleeve ripped from wrist to shoulder, but they succeeded in half carrying, half dragging their leader through the mass of deputies to the door, and out into the air.

## VI

When he had gone, the deputies continued to demonstrate, and the hour of Lucien's ordeal had come. He was equal to the occasion. The extremists, whose one idea was to have Bonaparte outlawed without any debate and without any formality, crowded

up the steps of the dais on which the President sat, shaking their fists, roaring threats, and demanding the vote at once. Lucien remained calm and unflinching and, for a few moments, they listened to him. He reminded them that they had not allowed Bonaparte to say a word. Obviously he had only come to find out what was taking place, in the public interest. He could sympathize with the fear of tyranny, but surely they would not wish to condemn the General unheard. Even these few sentences were interrupted constantly, and he saw that nothing would stop the Jacobin leaders from speaking. He decided to yield the chair to Chazal, and to claim his own right, as a deputy, to speak from the tribune. By main force he succeeded in establishing himself in a corner of the tribune, the rest of the space being occupied by Jacobins. They tried to push and drag him from his place, but without success.

It was soon evident that, by withstanding the demands for an immediate vote, Lucien had gained sufficient time for the deputies to begin quarrelling among themselves. Some wanted to have the decree giving Bonaparte command of the troops rescinded. Others wanted to rescind the decree of translation. So many deputies had motions to put forward that arguments broke out, and the few moments that Lucien had gained by refusing to carry out the wishes of the most violent, began to have their effect. Every additional minute counted, for there were some who tried to appreciate the situation calmly, and to these it was evident that there was now a real danger of a military coup. One of them fastened on the illegality of Bonaparte's appointment to the command of the garrison troops. Others betrayed their fear by demanding instantly a decree stating that, whatever else he commanded, Bonaparte had no authority over the grenadiers who formed the special detachment, whose duty it was to protect the deputies. Talot went further. He would ask the Senate to transfer the Five Hundred to Paris, whither they would proceed under the protection of the troops. Jourdan and Augereau, still undecided, might have seized their opportunity. The extremists would have followed them, and they might have won over a part of the troops. But neither of the two soldiers was sure of himself, and it seems that they knew the bulk of the army would follow

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Bonaparte and nobody else. And they were not willing to risk their careers. Lucien, still clinging to his corner of the tribune, made several attempts to speak, but nobody would listen to him, and Chazal was unable to restore order. It was nearly five o'clock and outside the November darkness was beginning. Obviously something decisive would have to be done very soon. The cry of "*Hors la loi!*" was raised again, and the friends of Bonaparte were jostled and insulted every time they tried to make themselves heard.

Close to the tribune was one of the Inspectors of the Five Hundred, Frégeville, a friend who could be relied on. Lucien made a sign to him and he approached. "Unless," said Lucien, "there is some kind of intervention within ten minutes, I can't be responsible any longer for what may happen." Then, as Frégeville cleared a path for himself to the doors, Lucien, making as much of the dramatic moment as possible, took off his cap, his long red robe and sash, and laid them ostentatiously on the edge of the tribune. The Assembly was taken by surprise, and the seriousness of this act on the part of their President made them listen for a moment, while he explained that, since he was refused a hearing, he was forced to lay down the insignia of his office. Then, once more, there was pandemonium. The extremists, mad with rage, and intent only on getting Bonaparte outlawed before he could strike, repeated their wild cry. The moderate men, who still thought that violence could be avoided, crowded round the tribune, imploring Lucien to reconsider his decision. Others shouted that the session should be closed. But the extremists, who had most to fear, had the loudest voices and the heaviest fists. There was no longer the slightest hope of bringing them to reason. All Lucien could do was to wait for the answer to the message Frégeville had taken to his brother.

## VII

Bonaparte, dizzy and shaken, had been brought back to that vast cold room where Sieyès still sat trying to warm himself by the miserable fire. He recovered quickly, and an informal council

was held. There was no disagreement. Sieyès said that political action was now out of the question. The whole affair could only succeed by the use of force. Murat and Leclerc expressed the same opinion, but in stronger language and with more urgency. Ducos was, as always, the echo of Sieyès. Only Bonaparte hesitated, and for several reasons. He was still unwilling to come to power like a victorious soldier. Not even now, when so much had been done that was illegal, would he abandon the hope that there still might be found some way of getting his way of coming to power sanctioned. Secondly, he knew that by pretending to restrain men whose minds were made up, he would make them more eager for action. Thirdly, there was the question of the troops. No doubt most of them would follow him. Murat, Marmont, Lannes, Berthier had had their orders while the plot was being prepared. Murat, who was already a hero to the cavalry, had made sure of the 21st Chasseurs, whom he had led in the scuffle of Vendémiaire. The 8th and 9th Dragoons, the latter commanded by the Corsican Sébastiani, gave him no trouble. They had seen him at work in Italy, and were full of the glory of that campaign which had astonished the world. Lannes could answer for the infantry, Marmont for the artillery. But there were always the 2,000 grenadiers, who composed the guard of the two Chambers and of the Directory. They were veterans of the old revolutionary days, not so much soldiers as gendarmes, or men-of-all-work used by such as Barras. Their sympathies were with the Jacobins. Murat could not understand why there should be so much fuss about throwing a lot of lawyers out of their hall; he guaranteed to finish the job in a trice. Let him take the grenadiers. But, objected the others, would they follow him? Very well, if they wouldn't, then he would lead the troops of the line against them. But that was exactly what Bonaparte would not have. It was too much like the old clashes of the factions, and would make him appear as the leader of a faction within the army, instead of as the chosen leader of the nation.

There was present in the room a Senator named Fargues. It was resolved that, before the decisive action was taken, Fargues should go to the Hall of Apollo with the story of the uproar in the Five Hundred, and the attack on Bonaparte (whom they, the

Ancients, had appointed). Fargues had no doubt that he would be able to present the situation in such a light that the Senators would issue a decree giving Bonaparte civil authority to restore order. Invested with this authority, Bonaparte would be able to overcome the scruples of the grenadiers, and, presumably as the civil authority, would lead his soldiers against the Five Hundred. What chance of success had this ludicrous idea? Were the Ancients likely to invest with full civil power the man who had already persuaded them to give him command of the troops? Would not the mere suggestion of such a thing prove to his adversaries that his conspiracy was a failure? At all events, Fargues went off on his mission and, hardly had he gone, when there arrived two emissaries from Talleyrand: Montrond and Duquesney. Their news was that there appeared to be no possibility of averting the decree of outlawry in the Five Hundred. The decree would be voted.

And now, at last, all hesitation ended. Napoleon took over from Bonaparte. He strode across the room to the tall windows, threw open one of them, and, standing there, looking down on the terrace, he drew his sword. Some of those below saw him and knew that the moment of decision had come. Then they heard his command: "*Aux armes!*" and were glad to be done with the doubts and questionings of that perplexing day. Many recognized the voice that had rallied them on the terrible bridge of Lodi or in the marshes of Arcole, or remembered their leader on his black horse at Rivoli, pointing out the captured Austrian flags: "*Couche-toi dessus, brave Lasalle! Tu l'as bien mérité!*" Murat, ferocious in his impatience, to whom the delays and consultations were inexplicable, shouted an order. The methodical Sérurier loosened his sword in its sheath. Across the lawns and among the bare trees, where the evening mist was rising, the word of command was taken up and repeated. The squadron of dragoons in the forecourt mounted their horses. The infantry formed up, and the furthest detachments encircling the castle began to move in. But in the inner court, between the deputies and the troops of the line, the impassible grenadiers of the Government stood to arms.



## CHAPTER XVII

### *The Drums of Brumaire*

#### I

BONAPARTE, followed by his staff, emerged from the building. All about him was the stir of the troops forming up, and the exhilaration which sweeps through the ranks when it is known that the moment for action is at hand, after the hours of boredom. Now was the moment for their General to appear like the man of the legend. They had seen him at the window and heard his command. He could afford no more blunders on this day, and he could now retrieve them all at a stroke. He called for his horse, but the heroic and the comic jostled each other throughout the events of Brumaire, and they brought him the sailor's horse, the horse of Admiral Bruix. The poor animal was terrified by the noise, by the clash and jangle of accoutrements and the loud voices. It reared and bucked and swerved and cavorted, so that Bonaparte had difficulty in mounting and, once mounted, in keeping his seat. It seemed that nothing could go right with him on this day. But he was a horseman, and soon had his mount in hand, and was ready to make the most important of his appeals. He advanced to where the grenadiers stood and asked them if he could count on them to follow him. A stolid silence answered him. Of the enthusiasm and devotion which he was accustomed to see in men's eyes when he spoke as a soldier to soldiers, there was no sign. Deputies who had mingled with them had told them that Bonaparte would be outlawed before nightfall. They had their future to think of. Therefore he received no answer to his question. Sieyès, watching from a window, feared that they might attempt to lay hands on Bonaparte, and sent a warning to the General.

It was an anticlimax. The call to arms was not to be followed by action after all. Bonaparte turned his horse and rode out of the Court of Honour on to the terrace where the troops of whom

## THE DRUMS OF BRUMAIRE

he had no doubts were drawn up. They had seen him on the battlefield, and their cheers as he drew near told him what he already knew. He made them a speech full of fury, allowing the bitterness and mortification of the bungled day to rasp and grate in his voice, making no attempt to restrain his outrageous abuse of the deputies. He said the Five Hundred had attempted to assassinate him. The listening troops saw blood trickling down his cheeks and smeared over his face—the proof that he had been wounded by the daggers of the deputies. For there was nobody to tell them that, in the extreme of impatience, he had lacerated with his nails the pustules of a skin disease contracted at Toulon. He told them that the Five Hundred were in the pay of England, and so forth. And his officers embellished the tale of the daggers and of the infamies of the deputies. The soldiers had no love for the “lawyers,” and had never heard any word of respect for them from their officers. They needed only Bonaparte’s speech to make them fighting mad, so that when he repeated to them the question which the grenadiers had left unanswered, could he count on them to follow him, they gave him to understand that they awaited only his word of command. But he did not give it. For the grenadiers of the Government had remained silent during the cheering. They had heard both sides of the story and, in the present uproar, it was impossible for them to balance the evidence calmly, and to decide where their duty—and their interest—lay. Instinctively, they must have wished to join themselves to their fellow-soldiers; such exaltation must have been difficult to watch without approval. Yet the deputies were the Government, and they were civilians at bay. And to make a decision was to risk their livelihood and, possibly, their lives. Some may have asked themselves why Augereau, whom nobody could accuse of lack of courage, did not come to take command of them; why Jourdan wandered here and there, when he might have made himself the protector of the Government.

The afternoon was wearing away. There was no word from Fargues. The Senator had found the Ancients stupefied. He had recounted to them, with all the art he could summon, the story of what had happened at the Five Hundred. But, instead of giving Bonaparte the powers he sought, they went into Secret

appointment of Bonaparte, thus rebelling also against the Senate. They had attacked Bonaparte and, by crying for his outlawry, they had outlawed themselves. (Sieyès had used these words to Bonaparte an hour or two ago.) There was, he said, one plain duty for the troops entrusted with the protection of the Chambers. They must deliver the majority from the threat of the minority. "Only those," he said, "who join me here can be recognized as your deputies. Those who remain in the Orangery must be expelled. They are no longer the representatives of the people. They are the representatives of the dagger."

It was the speech they needed. But Lucien understood the insatiable appetite of the times for extravagant and theatrical scenes. The grenadiers were evidently won over, and it must be remembered that while they had been making up their minds they had been conscious of the swelling anger of the other troops. But Lucien had decided to give them a treat, something in the way of melodrama, which would remind them of the great days of the Legislative Assembly, and the Convention. He pointed to the blood-stained face of his brother, as though he were saying, "See where the daggers of these ruffians have drawn the blood of your General." Then he borrowed a sword and, with the majesty of Talma, thrust the point to within an inch of his brother's chest, shouting that if ever this brother violated the liberty of the Republic, he, Lucien, would slay him with his own hand. There was no resisting such a performance. And even if any had felt inclined to hesitate, how could soldiers remain unmoved by the mounting excitement of the dragoons, who, intoxicated with rhetoric, could hardly be held back by their officers? Bonaparte saw that now indeed the moment had come to settle the matter in military fashion. It was after five o'clock, and the dusk was deepening, when he gave the order which all awaited.

### III

Murat at once placed himself at the head of a column. The officers drew their swords. At the command "*Tambours ! La charge !*" the drums beat to the attack and, as the column moved

forward, the crowds which had gathered fell back, cheering the soldiers and shouting, "Down with the Jacobins!" The tall Gascon, who had so fretted and cursed at the bickerings and hesitations of this day, led his men straight across the inner court to the Palace, up the steps, through the rooms above which the Ancients still conducted their fatuous debate, and along the covered way which was the approach to the Orangery. The repeated thud of the drums, reverberating through the building, announced to the men waiting in the Orangery their approaching doom.

While Lucien had been making his speech some of the deputies had left their Hall to find out what was happening. Messengers also had been despatched. Word brought by these left the Five Hundred in no doubt of what was about to happen. When it was known that their own guard had deserted them, their last hope vanished. From their Hall, now filled with the gloom of the winter evening, arose a roaring of confused voices. Some, still clinging to the idea that they were the inviolate representatives of the people, and that the matter could be settled in the usual parliamentary manner, ran to the tribune and attempted to address their colleagues. Others, overcome by terror, escaped by back doors or clambered through the windows, dropped to the ground, and fled into the park. The more courageous remained, knowing that the Palace was surrounded, and either tried to calm their fellows, or prepared to play the Roman, sitting silent in their togas. A few, as though to rouse their courage, shouted repeatedly "*Vive la République!*"—a challenge to military force. And when out of the gathering darkness came the rolling thunder of the drums and the rhythmic tramp of feet, they shouted the more loudly: "*Vive la République!*" But they could not drown the insistent drums, which were beating steadily, louder and louder, advancing with the chill darkness of night. The trapped men watched the doors. Many of them had seen the insurrectionary mobs at work, and had heard them storming like a torrent along the narrow Parisian streets. But outside these doors there was no uproar of hot anger; only the impersonal beat and terrible lilt of the drums coming closer, and the heavy fall of marching feet. And then, as they stood or sat, looking towards the entrance to their Hall, the doors were pushed

open violently, and they saw the soldiers with fixed bayonets and, at their head, the magnificent cavalryman.

The soldiers deployed as they entered the Hall, and the officers went towards the tribune. They were met by a cry of protest: "Soldiers, you are tarnishing your laurels!" To which came an answering cry from an officer: "Citizens, you are dissolved!" Then there was a general confusion of noise, all the deputies appealing to the soldiers, who stood along the walls awaiting orders, as though on the barrack square. Once more the voice cried, "Citizens, you are dissolved!" And then Leclerc entered with his troops. Murat, who was the least patient of men, decided that the thing must be settled quickly. Telling the citizens that they were dissolved was not his way of doing it. He roared, in the language of the barrack-rooms: "Chuck all this rabble out!" The soldiers then began to close in from every side of the Hall, while still the drums beat. It was all over in a few minutes, without bloodshed. The deputies retreated before the bayonets, overturning benches and tables, and leaving sashes and caps in their wake. Some gathered up their long robes and dashed for the doors. Others retreated slowly, trying to maintain their dignity, and protesting as they went. Those who still sat on their benches in silence were firmly removed and carried out. And all the time, until the Hall was cleared, the drums throbbed.

Of the deputies who managed to escape, either before the entrance of the troops or after, some wandered about the gardens and the woods in the darkness, and then crept into Saint-Cloud and sought shelter. Some tried to return to Paris, but found all the gates closed by order of Fouché. The next day, peasants and workmen going about their business, found, caught up on thickets or lying soiled and torn on woodland paths, tricolour sashes and fragments of scarlet Roman robes.

## IV

The triumph of the conspiracy was complete; too complete. A military operation had settled the affair, in spite of all the careful preparations for something that would at least appear to be

constitutional. It seems that the leaders, even now, did not realize how wholeheartedly the people of France would welcome what had occurred and how few would bother about the legality or illegality of the measure taken. Murat, to whose simple mind the important and central thing was to throw out a pack of lawyers, was more in tune with the people than any of the others. They wanted Bonaparte, and they wanted him at any price, because they believed that he would give them an ordered society and a last victorious campaign, followed by peace. The men whom he had turned out were those who had over and over again kept themselves in power, against the wishes of the people. They were the victors of Vendémiaire, of Fructidor, of Floréal, and the country had suffered long enough from their tyranny and their incapacity. But Bonaparte and his chief supporters were determined to stand by the original story of constitutional action taken to destroy the Government. That was the version they intended to present to history. And so we have the amusing spectacle of the dawdling, timorous Senate going too fast, and being checked by those who had been driven to madness by its slowness. For as soon as the Ancients knew what had occurred in the Orangery, they came to heel. Wasting no time, they got their Committee of Five to propose a provisional Consulate, the adjournment of the two Councils, and, pending their re-assembly, the creation of a number of legislative committees to work with the Consuls. No sooner had they voted these measures than their attention was respectfully called to the fact that the Senate had no legal power to initiate laws. Its function was to confirm and make law the decisions of the Five Hundred. Its three decrees were therefore to be considered null and void. The leaders of the conspiracy had a much better idea. There was still time to collect a few deputies to represent the Five Hundred. Let them vote the measures required, which the Senate would ratify. Thus, the official version of the day would be that Bonaparte, as commander of the garrison, had been threatened with assassination by a group of extremists, had expelled these men, and had then been invited by the reasonable part of the Assembly to become one of the Consuls. The Senate had ratified this, and he had accepted. The original plan had failed, but it could be made to look as though it had succeeded.

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Lucien at once sent out messengers in pursuit of the straying deputies. Those who had hidden themselves in the village of Saint-Cloud were the easiest to find, and it did not take long to overcome their fears and to convince them that the unpleasantness was over, and that their presence was needed at an extraordinary session. So back they came, probably less than a hundred of them, through the darkness of the park, and into that disordered chamber from which they had so lately been ejected. In the dim candlelight some of them fell asleep. But Lucien, once more in the President's chair, saw to it that all the formalities were fulfilled. When the Consulate was proposed, the project was passed to a Committee, which debated it with the usual solemnity. It was nearly midnight when the Committee presented its report. Boulay de la Meurthe and Cabanis spoke at some length, justifying the contemplated changes. Boulay, speaking the thought of Bonaparte, said: "It is our aim to nationalize the Republic." And he very truly added that the Jacobins had always wanted the Republic, not of a nation but of a faction—their faction. The Ancients, who had been so slow all through the day, could not understand why the Five Hundred were behaving so formally now and wasting so much time. They were at the end of their patience when they were finally summoned to ratify the vote of the deputies. The three Consuls—Bonaparte, Sieyès, and Ducos—were asked to attend on the Chambers in order to take the oath of fidelity to the Republic.

At two o'clock in the morning Lucien read to the three Consuls the formula of the oath they were to take, and they, standing before him, swore as requested. Among the spectators were many from Paris, who, having heard the news, had come to see how the day would end. Bonaparte then issued a proclamation in which, once more, he announced that he was a man of no faction and that the time had come to restore order and a way of life dear to moderate men. He also included the completely false picture of what had happened in the Orangery, speaking of daggers, and saying that a score of assassins had hurled themselves at him, *cherchant ma poitrine*. This done, he drove back to the rue de la Victoire with Bourrienne, speaking no word. Sieyès and Ducos went back to the Luxembourg where Gohier and Moulin remained under the

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guard of the sullen Moreau, whose day this might have been. But Sieyès had found his Sword; the Sword that cut both ways.

### V

The men behind the conspiracy had taken no chances. If Sieyès had his carriage waiting at Saint-Cloud all the day and Cambacérès was working at an alternative Consulate, Fouché had been no less cautious. As soon as the Chambers were safely at Saint-Cloud, he gave the order for the closing of the barriers of Paris and prepared to act against the losing side, whichever it might be, in his own interests. Only his own messengers were allowed to pass to and fro between Paris and Saint-Cloud<sup>1</sup>. Nobody could interfere with him, since what was left of the Directory was shut up in the Luxembourg and the new Government was not yet formed. If Bonaparte were defeated, Fouché was still Minister of Police, and ready to arrest him at the orders of the new Government. If Bonaparte won, Fouché was ready to obey his orders. The gates were closed only against the losers. But Fouché had an ambitious secretary called Thurot, who had learnt something from his master. This Thurot went to Saint-Cloud on the morning of the 19th Brumaire and told Lavalette, one of Bonaparte's aides, that Fouché was playing a double game and hinted that he, Thurot, was the man to be Minister of Police, as he was devoted to Bonaparte. To prove his devotion he sent men to close the gates of Paris against the Jacobin opposition in the Five Hundred. But Fouché was not the man to be betrayed as easily as this, and it was Thurot who lost his job.

The news of the success of the conspiracy meant merely a change of masters, as far as Fouché was concerned. He issued a proclamation (in his own name) announcing the change of Government, which was read in the theatres on the evening of the 19th Brumaire. He was, of course, clever enough to include in the

<sup>1</sup> So completely was Fouché master of the situation for a few hours, that Paris had no news of what was happening until the evening. Mme d'Abrantès says that even the Bonaparte women were ignorant of events at St. Cloud during the day.



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proclamation the legend of the attempted assassination of Bonaparte. The next morning he inserted another proclamation in the *Moniteur*. Thus he repaid Bonaparte, who had kept him in office against the wishes and the advice of Sieyès.

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Talleyrand had spent the day pleasantly enough in a house which he had taken at Saint-Cloud, surrounded by his friends: Roederer and his son, the apostate priest Desrenaudes, and the faithful Montrond to amuse the company. When the suspense was ended and it was confirmed that the conspiracy had succeeded, Talleyrand said, as one would have expected him to say: "We must go and dine." And off they all went to the house of Mlle Lange, the actress, in private life Mme Simons, said to be a favourite of Barras. Montrond told them that he had seen Bonaparte turn pale and lose his self-control when he heard the cry of "*Hors la loi!*" And, to make the company laugh, Montrond said: "*Général Bonaparte, cela n'est pas correct.*" It was not a very good joke, but they were all in the mood to be easily amused. A few days later Bonaparte was talking to Cambacérès of Talleyrand: "I know," he said, "that he only belongs to the Revolution by his misconduct. He was a Jacobin and a renegade in the Constituent Assembly, and our guarantee is his self-interest."<sup>1</sup>

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On the evening of the 19th Brumaire, Bonaparte's mother, Mme Leclerc (Pauline Bonaparte), Mme Permon and her daughter Laure, the future Duchesse d'Abrantès, went to the Feydou Theatre. Mme Bonaparte was restless and anxious, and repeatedly turned to the door of their box, as though expecting a messenger. Suddenly there was an interruption on the stage, the dialogue ceased, the actors and actresses stood perplexed. Then the leading actor stepped forward, bowed, and cried: "Citizens! There has been an unsuccessful attempt by traitors to assassinate General Bonaparte at Saint-Cloud . . ." Pauline uttered shriek after shriek,

<sup>1</sup> One day Bonaparte asked Talleyrand how he had made his fortune so rapidly. Talleyrand said, "I bought stock on the 17th Brumaire and sold it on the 19th."

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a glass of water was brought, and her mother, very pale herself, tried to calm her. They made their way back to the rue de la Victoire, outside which crowds had gathered, and there they were told the news of the day.

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On this same evening, four troopers clattered across the court of Mme Campan's School for Young Ladies at St. Germain, and thundered at the door. Within, all was excitement and alarm, and among the faces that appeared at the windows were those of two pupils who had been on holiday in Paris until three days ago, and had then been sent back to school, to be got out of the way. Presently they were summoned by Mme Campan, who was exceedingly angry at the disturbance, and told the news from Saint-Cloud. One of them was Hortense de Beauharnais, the other Caroline Bonaparte. And this was the gallant Murat's way of showing that his future wife was in his thoughts.

## VI

Bonaparte arrived back in the rue de la Victoire at three o'clock in the morning. Yet, in spite of the strain and anxiety of the preceding days, he was at the Luxembourg shortly after ten o'clock the same morning. He had dressed in civilian costume, with a black beaver hat, as though to emphasize the fact that it was only citizen Bonaparte approaching. He went to the apartment occupied by Sieyès, and it is a matter for regret that there is no record of their conversation. When it was over Ducos joined them, and they entered the room where the Directors had held their meetings, for their first session. Obviously Sieyès was expecting to occupy the Presidential chair, as the experienced statesman of the three. But unfortunately Ducos said to Bonaparte, as they came into the room, "There's no need to have a vote as to who shall preside. It's your right to occupy the chair." Sieyès heard the remark, but Bonaparte's tact saved the situation. He suggested that they should take it in turns to preside. He went further, since he had determined not to give Sieyès any excuse

for jealousy or sulkiness. There was only one lasting passion in Sieyès—the making of Constitutions. Imagine, therefore, his delight when Bonaparte begged him to prepare a new Constitution. Ministers were then chosen and urgent questions, such as finance, were discussed.

Meanwhile, what the people wanted to know at once was whether, this time, peace and order would really return or whether this latest change of Government would be like all the others; the opportunity for a victorious faction to take its revenge on its opponents. Everybody was pleased to see the end of the Directory but anxious for the future. There was a kind of scepticism born of many disappointments. And it was this anxiety and distrust which Bonaparte, with his prodigious capacity for hard work, banished so quickly. As one of the earliest proclamations said, there were to be no victors and no vanquished, but only security for all to go about their affairs. That was what they wanted to know. They were reassured.

And so began what the Duc de Broglie called one of the two greatest periods of French history : the four years of the Consulate.

\* \* \* \* \*

*“ Quand il était parti de Malmaison pour Rochefort avant de se livrer à ses ennemis, il avait quitté lentement, à regret, ses souvenirs et la scène du monde. Il ne s'éloignera des mémoires humaines qu'avec la même lenteur, et l'on entend encore, à travers les années, à travers les révolutions, à travers des rumeurs étranges, les pas de l'Empereur qui descend de l'autre côté de la terre et gagne des horizons nouveaux<sup>1</sup>. ”*

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Bainville : *Napoleon*. (Arthème Fayard et Cie, 1931.)

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## APPENDIX

### *The Mystery of Barras*

THE conduct of Barras in connexion with the conspiracy of Brumaire seems, at a first glance, to be inexplicable. Nor will the reader of his Memoirs, in which there is a lengthy account of the event, be satisfied with the apologia presented therein ; a shuffling answer to a direct challenge of Gohier in 1824. The mystery to be cleared up is this : Sieyès and Ducos were leaders of the conspiracy, Gohier and Moulin were ignorant of what was going on, but were determined to defend the Constitution of '95. Barras could have told Gohier and Moulin what was afoot. Lefebvre, in command of the garrison troops, would have obeyed him, and the plot could have been revealed and smashed, with Barras emerging as the saviour of the Constitution. Alternatively, Barras could have joined Bonaparte and come out once more on the winning side. Who, knowing anything of this fascinating ruffian, could guess that he would be found neither wholly on one side nor the other, and that he, who had stopped at nothing to keep himself in power, would be cornered, and forced to retire into private life ?

Now let us see how Barras himself explains his conduct. He presents himself to the reader as a disinterested hero. Those who are against the conspiracy appeal to the old warrior of Thermidor and Vendémiaire to save the Constitution. " Have you forgotten your past achievements ? " they cry. " What scruples are holding you in check ? " And so on. The conspirators are equally assiduous in courting him. Bonaparte and Moreau dine at his table. Talleyrand, Fouché, Réal seek him out. They talk of making improvements in the present system of Government. They offer Barras the Presidency, but, with a dignified gesture, he refuses it. They plead with him. " Bonaparte does not want to do anything without you." As late as November 4th Réal comes to him, and persuades him to receive Bonaparte that night.

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"But," says Barras, "All I will say is that the Republic must be retained as it is," adding, "My irrevocable determination is to withdraw from public life." At nine o'clock on the same night Bonaparte arrives, and again asks Barras to accept the Presidency of a reconstructed and regenerated Government. Barras offers to put the matter before the deputies, and to suggest the provisional appointment of a President. After which he will resign his position, and retire to the country. Two days later Joseph, Talleyrand and Fouché call upon him for his last word, and carry away more fine sentiments. Yet, after all this, Barras asks us to believe that the events of the 18th Brumaire surprised him. He had thought that nothing was intended but "a few modifications and a change of Directors." On the 18th Brumaire, Talleyrand and Bruix give him to understand that his four fellow-Directors have resigned. Barras looks out of his window in the rue de Tournon, and sees the troops marching to the Tuileries, followed by the people. With manly honesty he writes out his letter of resignation. Talleyrand, with tears in his eyes, kisses his hand, calls his conduct generous and sublime, and thanks him on behalf of France. Bruix is also weeping. They go out. Merlin de Thionville appears, calling for Bonaparte's head. The Cabarrus tries to encourage the hero. But Barras has, as ever, the good of his country at heart. His public life is finished.

Not a word has the ring of truth. It is clear that Barras was in the confidence of the conspirators, and equally clear that he could not make up his mind to come out boldly on the side of the conspiracy. Why? He wanted to remain in power, and he cannot have imagined that the conspiracy would fail, unless he himself took action against it. What, then, caused the hesitation which finally ruined his career? Gohier's explanation is an interesting and a plausible one. Gohier says that there were two conspiracies, and that before Bonaparte had adopted the plan of Sieyès, Barras had come to an understanding with the Bourbons and was preparing to lead a royalist insurrection, which failed because Brumaire forestalled it. Alexandre Dumas, who met Barras in his old age, believed the current rumour that Barras had sold himself to the royalists. The royalist agent Fauche-Borel boasted that he had succeeded in buying Barras. He was a barefaced liar, but it is

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odd that he should have been one of the frequent guests at Chaillot when Barras lived there in retirement in 1829. And what other explanation is there of the amicable relations between the Governments of Louis XVIII and Charles X and the regicide Barras ? And why did Bonaparte say that if, on the 18th Brumaire, he had known what Barras was up to, he would have had him shot ? As the day approached and Barras saw that his own conspiracy was doomed to failure, he probably decided that the money paid by the royalists for his services would recompense him for the loss of power. Moreover there is a probability that Bonaparte also paid him for his resignation. He, of course, hotly denies this. " They would not have dared to suggest it." But he goes on rather lamely to say that if Bonaparte did allot a sum of money for that purpose, Talleyrand took it. That, too, is not unlikely. We may be sure that if Bonaparte had offered a larger sum than the royalists, Barras would have lost his hesitation.



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